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# THE IDEOLOGY OF THE TEMPLE

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George M. Soares - Prabhu

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# Editorial

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# Editorial

Recent events in India have made us aware of the significance of places of worship (Temple, Mosque, Gurudwara, Church) in the lives of people. They have alerted us to multiple significance that such places of worship enjoy. Temples are not only places of worship. They are centres of instruction, which can become fora for political agitation, objects of mob violence, and instruments for the political manipulation of people. Such a fusion of religious and political interests has always been part of the history of the temple, not least in the Bible, where the political and religious roles of the temple stand out with unusual clarity. This is because biblical religion is essentially a political religion, in which divine revelation is mediated through the political history of a people. The temple which stands at the centre of much of the religiosity of the Bible is thus inevitably the focus of sharp interplay of religion and politics.

This issue of *Jeevadhara* proposes to reflect on the religious and political significance of the temple in the Bible. It does this against the background of the Hindu understanding of their temples and the Muslim understanding of their mosques. For biblical theology in India needs, I believe, such a pluri-religious background if it is to be meaningful.

Reflection on the temple, whether on the cosmic symbolism of the Hindu temple, or on the integrative potential of the mosque, or on the political power of the temple of Jerusalem, or the hope held out by God-made temple predicted by Jesus, holds lessons for us all. It alerts us to the presence of God working wonderfully in nature and in history to bring both to their fulfilment. It warns us against absolutizing the expressions of our religious experience — whether these are articulated in words or built up in stones. For such fanaticism turns what should be houses of prayer into fields of battle. Both Ayodha and Jerusalem offer illustrations of this.

This lesson is specially relevant to the community which, for Christians, has inherited the religious and political role which the temple played in the Bible. It is the church which is today our temple. And like any temple it can be a sign either of God's presence or of human arrogance and pride.

# The Hindu Temple

## Its Significance Today

As a rich synthesis of many symbols the Hindu temple offers us an unusually powerful expression of the vastness and complexity of Hinduism. Its structures and rituals symbolize the life giving stream of Hinduism in its movement from chaos to cosmos, from the omnipresence of the Absolute to its localization, from time to eternity, from isolation to communion, from darkness to light, and from bondage to freedom. We are invited to contemplate this extraordinary symbol which is both an icon of God and a replica of the universe. It holds lessons for a secular and consumer world which has lost sight of transcendence and has ceased to understand the value of sacrifice. Contemplation of the symbolism of the temple will lead to a rebirth of ourselves and our community, which will provide us with a prophetic vision for our times.

I have been a student of Hinduism for over twenty years, and I consider this a great grace the good Lord has bestowed on me. The more I study Hinduism the more I am baffled by its vastness and complexity. Hinduism is not one single religion or tradition, but a "veritable museum of beliefs and practices, customs and codes of conduct, approaches and achievements", so that "the outsider is likely to despair at the wide variety of conceptions and aspirations"<sup>1</sup>. The vastness and complexity of Hinduism finds a "more varied incarnation in shrines and temples"<sup>2</sup>. Yet, the unity-in-diversity and the diversity-in-unity of Hinduism is also reflected in its temples. Because "while it is true that temples in the South differ from temples in the North both with regard to their structure and to their ritual details,

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1 S. K. R. Rao, *The Folk Origins of Indian Temples* (Bangalore, IBH Prakashan, 1980), 2.

2 Ibid.

closer inquiry would reveal that these differences are more apparent than real, more superficial than deep"<sup>3</sup>. Hence one way of approaching Hinduism is to study its temples. The temple reflects not only the diversity of belief, but also the complexity of the history which has shaped Hinduism. Since "the house of God has more than one aspect and origin"<sup>4</sup>, many different names are used to indicate the temple.

All religious traditions use images and symbols to express not only the experience which has given birth to them, but also the history which has shaped them. But "India not only thinks in images. It [also] builds them up in a consistent body of which the sum total is the temple"<sup>5</sup>. Like Hinduism "The Hindu temple [too] is a synthesis of many symbols"<sup>6</sup>. Not only some concrete realities, like fire or water, but also visible actions, like a bath or a circumambulation, can have symbolic functions and religious meaning. Hence in trying to understand the Hindu temple and its significance for us today we will need to study not only the building that constitutes the temple, but also the ritual that is associated with it. We will need to appreciate not only its architecture but also its liturgy. In this study I shall confine myself to some of the more important aspects of both. To understand the Hindu temple in all its complexity and variety, and to communicate this understanding fully I would need more than a whole life-time.

### Garbhagrha: from chaos to cosmos

The most simple temple consists of a sacred enclosure (*garbhagrha*) which may be constructed on a fairly conspicuous base (*adhiṣṭhāna*). The *garbhagrha* may be surrounded by a more elaborate superstructure (*prāsāda* or *vimāna*<sup>7</sup>. The *garbhagrha*, the womb-chamber, is seen as the remnant of tribal or Shaiva sacred dolmens as well as of the sacred enclosure within which the patron or host of the Vedic sacrifice and his wife were consecrated. The *adhiṣṭhāna* is evocative of the Vedic altar<sup>8</sup>. The *prasāda* or *vimāna* reminds us of the palace of a king. It is not without reason that the most essential component of the

3 S. K. R. Rao, *The Temple Ritual* (Bangalore, IBH Prakashan, 1985), 2.

4 S. Kramrisch, *The Hindu Temple* (Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, rep. '76), 134.

5 Ibid., 175.

6 Ibid., 166.

7 Ibid., 167.

8 Ibid., 145-57.

temple is called *garbhagrha*. Life begins in the womb. The building of a temple — both as an architectural process and as a religious monument — is also the unfoldment of life.

The practice of creating a sacred enclosure is more ancient than that of putting up a building to house an icon. Primal communities, which enjoyed some kind of residential stability, would come together to a particular place whenever they needed to perform some religious rite. This place was considered sacred. It could be a specially selected cave or a spot made conspicuous by some great rock or a mighty tree<sup>9</sup>. If there was no visible landmark, the sacred space would be marked by a stone boundary. In course of time the tree or the rock indicating the sacred spot acquired the sacredness of the place, and eventually itself became the object of veneration. This tradition did not disappear when humans learnt the art of building houses and constructed temples. Hence, though "It would seem outrageous to be told that in a large number of celebrated shrines in India, only blocks of stone or stumps of wood are worshipped, in fact this can hardly be denied"<sup>10</sup>.

The temple "is built with the fervour of devotion (*bhakti*) as a work of offering and pious liberality"<sup>11</sup>. The *Brhat-saṃhita*, a sixth century text on architecture, has the following admonition:

Let him who wishes to enter the worlds that are reached by sacrificial offerings and the performance of religious obligations build a temple to the gods, by doing which he attains both the results of sacrifice and the performance of religious obligations (55.2).

This admonition is significant on two counts. First, the temple and the worship associated with it is displacing the earlier Vedic sacrificial ritual. This happened as the result of *bhakti* towards Śiva, Viṣṇu, Durgā, or some other deity coming to be seen as more important than *karma*. Second, building a temple is considered as meritorious as the earlier rites.

9 Rao 1980, pp. 14–18. Kramrisch 1976, pp. 167–70. B. Baumer, "From Guha to Akasa: The Mystical Cave in the Vedic and Saiva Traditions", in K. Vatsyayan (ed.), *Concepts of Space: Ancient and Modern* (New Delhi, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, 1991), 105–06.

10 Rao 1980, 61.

11 Kramrisch 1976, 142.

The earlier sacrificial ritual (*yajña*) was meant to ensure cosmic harmony (*rta*). The wholeness of creation was essential for the wholeness and, consequently, happiness of humankind. The rite of building a temple is also an affirmation of and a search for the wholeness of the universe, because "The shrine is a microcosm of the whole of creation"<sup>12</sup>. This continuity of concern is also brought out by the fact that the plan of the temple is called *vāstu-puruṣa-maṇḍala*. The *vastu* "is the residue of the sacrifice"<sup>13</sup>. The sacrificer hoped that order and wellbeing would remain, i. e., follow after and as a result of the performance of the sacred rite. The *vastu-puruṣa-maṇḍala* indicates the closed space (*maṇḍala*) in which the Cosmic Man (*puruṣa*) is given a concrete expression (*vastu*)<sup>14</sup>. The act of building a temple is thus an imitation of the original Creator<sup>15</sup>. The order in the universe is experienced by us "in the regularity of our breathing and the symmetry and proportion of our body",<sup>16</sup> and this guides the architect who plans the temple. Thus the concrete expression of the Cosmic Man is also in some way an iconisation of our own being.

The temple is symbolic not merely of static order and harmony. It is also meant to indicate life with its dynamic equilibrium. Hence in the initial stage "the rite of *Garbhadhana* is performed and a casket which holds the Seed and Germ of the temple is immured in its wall, to the right of the door, above the level of the First Bricks"<sup>17</sup>. This casket (*maṅgala-aṅkura*) contains different seeds. Just as a seed, on sprouting, "absorbs the essence of the earth and transmutes it"<sup>18</sup>, so too the temple is an expression of the life potential of the earth.

The bank of a river/lake or the shore of the sea, the forest and the hill are some of the most common sites chosen by temple builders. "The presence of water is [so] essential [that] if it is neither available by nature nor by artifice it is present symbolically at the consecration of temple or image."<sup>19</sup> The lake, the

12 D. D. Shulman, *Tamil Temple Myths* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1980), 26.

13 Kramrisch 1976, 45.

15 Ibid., 10-21.

17 Ibid., 126

19 Ibid., 5-6

14. Ibid., 21.

16. Ibid., 132.

18. Ibid., 15.

river or the sea close to the temple is symbolic not merely of "the primeval water of the flood, the water that threatens to destroy the created universe"<sup>20</sup>, but also of the primeval womb from which all life on earth emerges<sup>21</sup>. The forest represents life in its original form, unspoilt by human interference. It is for this reason that the ancient seers went to the forest in search of the fullness of life<sup>22</sup>. The unshakeable (*acala*) mountain reminds us of the goal of our life-pilgrimage: God who is beyond the vicissitudes of *saṁsāra*, beyond the ups and downs of time and space. The mountain is also a reminder of *acalakīla*, of the earth which has the mountain (*acala*) as its pillar (*kīla*)<sup>23</sup>, the prop that prevents the sky from coming down.

The *mangala-ankura*, the auspicious sprout, which is buried within the temple wall finds a visible replica in the *garbhagrha*. It is from here that "the bricks...are as if pressed from the centre towards the perimeter by the small hollow of the Garbhagrha"<sup>24</sup>. This may actually go back to ancient times. Then a temple was built on a site already sanctified by the cult of some icon situated there. Like a tree, "the ancient temples grew over the icon"<sup>25</sup>. But the *garbhagrha* is not merely the static centre of the building process. The tree emerges from the seed, but the seed determines the shape of the tree. So too

The Garbhagrha is the nucleus of an all sided increase on the outside, in the horizontal, a stepping forth from the dark interior into expanding bulk and multiplicity of form and meaning. Its outward impact within its walls is traversed in the vertical direction by the urge of growth which corresponds to the sprouting of the seeds, and leads from the broad earth and the base of the temple towards its high point even above the superstructure. A synonym for Śikhara,

20 Shulman, 26.

21 S. Anand, *Major Hindu Festivals: A Christian Appreciation* (Bombay, St. Paul's Publications, 1991) 21.

22 *Brhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad*, 6.2.15; *Chāndogya-upaniṣad*, 5.10.1. Hence I am not sure that Shulman (p. 26) is right in maintaining that the forest stands for "the dwelling of chaos that opposes the ordered life of a society".

23 V. S. Apte, *The Student's Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, rep. 1965) 6-7.

24 Kramrisch, 1976, 103.

25 Rao, 1980, 23.

the curvilinear superstructure, is the term *Mañjarī* which means a shoot<sup>26</sup>.

The overall symbolic character of the temple is determined by the deity present in the *garbhagṛha*. The deity in the womb-chamber is like the foetus, and the temple is its full manifestation. We have indicated some of the important considerations that go into the building of a temple. We shall now try to see what the temple as a building is trying to symbolize.

### Vimāna: from omnipresence to localisation

As we have noted earlier, the Hindu temple has many names, but *vimāna* is

one of the most generally accepted names which designate a temple. *Vimāna* measured in its parts, is the form of God which is this universe, the macrocosm, and the temple as well, as a middle term made by man, the microcosm, according to his understanding and measure<sup>27</sup>.

God, who is beyond all form (*rūpa*) and name (*nama*) makes a primordial revelation of Himself in and through His creation<sup>28</sup>. To measure means to limit, to define, to concretize, to localize. As the world is a limited revelation of God, it is *māyā*<sup>29</sup>. The temple is a further localisation of the all-pervasive divine mystery. No icon can fully exhaust the divine mystery. Hence the devotee tries to express himself more fully by multiplying icons. It is in this sense that "polytheism is fundamental to Indian iconography, or, for that matter, to any iconography in the world"<sup>30</sup>.

The more complex the temple structure, the more elaborate will be the presence of icons and other symbolic architectural forms. The temple is thus one form of theology, one way of articulating a religious experience. The temple is also known as *prasada*. As such it is not "a house or something that is built up" but it "denotes a settling down (*pra-sad*) and a seat made of that which has settled down and acquired a concrete form,

26 Kramrisch, 1976, 165.

27 Ibid., 132

28. *Bṛhadaranyaka-upanishad*, 1. 4. 7

29 The word *māyā* is thought to be derived from the root *mā*, to measure. Kramrisch 1976, 131.

30 S. K. R. Rao, *The Icons and Images in Indian Temples* (Bangalore, IBH Prakashan, 1981), 13

the form of a dwelling, a residence, the seat of God"<sup>31</sup>. This means that the significance of the temple is not to be identified merely with the fact that it houses the icon. Not only the deity within the *garbhagriha*, but the whole temple is an icon of God. The temple is both the dwelling and the embodiment of God"<sup>32</sup>.

God is the primordial architect, the original iconographer. The world is the primary temple and icon. The man-made temple, then, is only an imitation of what God did in the beginning. Hence "The temple is built in the likeness of the universe and is its reduced image"<sup>33</sup>, and so "it is the place for the meeting and marriage of heaven and earth, where the whole world is present in terms of measure, and is accessible to man"<sup>34</sup>. But the world is not a static reality. It is full of energy, full of life. The temple tries to give expression to this energy and to celebrate life. This is already achieved by the very fact that water is an essential element of the temple scenario. Life is also indicated by the ritual significance of the trees growing in the proximity of the temple. The walls of the temple carry images of beautiful damsels. They represent *sakti*, "the Primordial Power and substance of the world"<sup>35</sup>.

The *Kirtimukha*, the Face of Glory, which is found in different parts of the temple, but specially on the threshold of the *garbhagriha*, is one of the most powerful symbols of life.

The countenances of animal and man are fused in this mask inflated with breath, bulging with power and modelled over the dark grin of death's skull... It usually has the mien of a lion; and is therefore also known as *Simha-mukha*.; multi-form and protean it is one of the essential symbols in which the Indian craftsman thinks<sup>36</sup>. The Lion-face carries the attributes of the Dragon or Serpent above and below its bulging countenance. Above are the Dragon's flaming horns. The horns are rays. The triple horns unite the 'natures' of the 'Lion' and the 'Dragon' in the triple unity of Time<sup>37</sup>.

31 Kramrisch 1976, 135-36.

32 S. Kramrisch, *Exploring India's Sacred Art*, selected writings, ed. B.S. Miller (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983) 249.

33 Kramrisch, 1976, 10,

34. Ibid., 7.

35 Ibid., 338.

36. Ibid., 323.

37 Ibid., 327.

The *Kirtimukha* is also known as *grāsamukha*, *rāhurmukha* and *Kala*. Rāhu is the demon (*asura*) who tries to devour the Sun and the Moon. Thus *asura* seems to have a negative significance. But *asura* "is derived from 'asu', 'vital breath' and 'ra', 'who gives' (RV. V. 41:3). It is the Supreme Spirit who, breathing, gives the Breath of Life"<sup>38</sup>. Hence originally *asura* is indicative of God<sup>39</sup>. The *kirtimukha*

has thus three aspects. 1) It is the Death-head of Time (*Kala*), the Devourer (*grasa*), of Rāhu, the Eclipse. 2) Death's head is vested with the insignia of Ahi-Vṛtra, the Dragon, the ophidian carrier and source of the solar power, the monster which envelops the universe and emits it... while 3) from its Lion's look and breath, the Supreme Spirit, Brahman goes out into the world. Death and the Living Breath, Dragon and Lion, out-pouring and indrawing coincide in the Monster's head, the Face of Glory. This Supreme identity of contraries constitutes the mask of the Godhead, the *kirtimukha* [sic]<sup>40</sup>.

The temple is not merely a building or an icon. It is a living organism pervaded by divine life. The deity in the *garbhagṛha* is not merely the architectural and iconographical point of departure, but also the vital principle (*jīva*) of the temple, "concealed in the darkness of the cave, enclosed in the mountain of its walls. The outside of the bulwark, teeming with ordered shapes and figures, is its explicit form"<sup>41</sup>.

The temple is also suggestive of a mountain with a cave. For primal peoples, who had not yet learnt the 'art of making houses, the cave was a favourite dwelling place. Normally a cave, obviously different from the one used as a dwelling place, also served as the place for sacred rites. The cave naturally provided for the needed secrecy, specially in those communities where not all the members, e.g., women and children, could participate in

38 Ibid., 326.

39 In the *Ṛg-veda* even Indra, the most important deity, is sometimes called 'asura'. A. A. Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology* (Varanasi, Indological Book House, rep. 1963), p. 58.

40 Kramrisch 1976, p. 328. In the *Rg-veda*, Vṛtra is the archetypal demon Macdonell, 158.

41 Kramrisch 1976, 359.

all the rites. Later, when the community moved out to some artificial dwelling place, the sacred cave continued to serve as the centre of worship. The temple, specially when the superstructure over the *garbhagrha* is very elaborate, brings to our mind the picture of a cave in a mountain with many points. The mountain has been symbolic of God's dwelling in many ancient cultures<sup>42</sup>. As "the rock was a miniature mountain"<sup>43</sup>, we can understand why "there are instances of famous temples dedicated to several sophisticated gods and goddesses (like Siva, Vishnu, Ganesa, Durga and Subrahmanya), which house in their sanctums only rocks, or large or small stones"<sup>44</sup>.

The mountain-like temple appears as the *axis mundi*. If life on earth is to be possible, then we need space<sup>45</sup>. In the thinking of primal peoples the mountain functioned as a pillar that kept the earth and heaven apart. This primal search for a strong cosmic prop finds its mythic expression in the *Atharva-veda* hymn to Skambha (10:8), "the Pillar of the Universe"<sup>46</sup>. The sages who created this hymn were in search of "a stable place in which the universe can be firmly supported"<sup>47</sup>. The stability of the temple, with its rhythmic form, is pointing to the stability of a universe which is characterized by the rhythm of life (*ṛta*). Without stability there can be no order. And the opposite is also true. The temple, as a re-creation of the unmoved mountain (*acala*), is a prop-providing structure. But to see the mountain merely as a cosmological symbol is to miss its full religious significance. The mountain connects not only the earth and the sky, but also the world where we live and the heaven where God dwells, creatures and Creator. This is also one of the significance of the flag-staff we find outside or atop some temples. It "serves as a pillar connecting the local shrine and, homologically, the earth to the Realm of the Sacred"<sup>48</sup>.

42 Rao 1980, 55-57.

43 Ibid., 37.

44. Ibid., 19

45 S. Kramrisch, "Space in Indian Cosmogony and in Architecture", in K. Vatsyayan, (ed.), *Concepts of Space: Ancient and Modern* (New Delhi, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, 1991) 101.

46 Baumer, 106.

47. Ibid., 107

48 F. W. Clothey, "Skanda-sasti: A Festival in Tamil India", *History of Religions*, VIII (1968-69), 250.

### Tirthayatra: from time to eternity

The journey to a temple is itself a sacred journey. It is a *tirthayātrā*, a journey leading the devotee across the river of time, a river that is constantly flowing (*saṁsāra*)<sup>49</sup>. The temple symbolizes God not only as the maker and ruler of the universe, but also as the end of time, as the transcendent goal of human striving. Vision (*darśana*), in more than one sense of the word, is the goal of all *tirthayatra* the Hindu temple "has of necessity to be seen"<sup>50</sup>. Thus *darsana* is also the final purpose of building a temple. While he is yet at a distance the devotee sees the *bindu*, "the Highest point of the temple... the temple as symbol of manifestation begins from the Bindu, the point between the unmanifest and the manifest"<sup>51</sup>. The journey from the visible to the Invisible, from the localized to the Omnipresent, from the formed to the Formless, from time to Eternity has already begun.

A symbol is polyvalent, and often ambivalent. Water, for instance, means both life and death (through drowning or being submerged by a flood), and consequently life through death (as in the baptismal liturgy). The very architecture of the temple suggests both life here on this earth and life hereafter, and that life here in the world should be our *tirthayatra* to life hereafter. The temple architecture is dominated by the square form. Our ancestors

regarded [the earth] as demarcated by sunrise and sunset, by the points where the sun apparently emerges above and sinks below the horizon; by the East and West and also by

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49 The word (*saṁsāra*) is formed by adding the suffix *saṁ* (together, and hence in continuity) to the root *sy* (to flow). Therefore life in time is symbolized by the river. Time comes and goes, never to come again. As one ancient Greek sage told us, we cannot put our foot into the same river more than once. The word *tīrthayātrā* is formed by putting together two words: *tirtha* and *yatra*. From the root *yā* we have *yatra* (journey). The word *tirtha* comes from the root *tṛ* (to cross over). Originally *tirtha* was used in reference to a river, and indicated a ford, a bridge or a passage. Hence in the Jaina tradition, the religious teacher who helps the devotee to go over to the other side is called *tīrthāṅkara*, a bridge-builder. That reminds us of the Latin word *pontifex*, the one who builds (*facere*) a bridge (pons).

50 Kramrisch 1976, 143.

51 Ibid., 353.

the North and South points. It is therefore represented by the ideogram or mandala of a square<sup>52</sup>.

Further, "The square 'cakra' or maṇḍala is a closed polygon symbolical of recurrent cycles of time"<sup>53</sup>.

The square construction of the temple symbolizes life on his earth, a life passing through many births, deaths and rebirths. But

The square is the essential and perfect form of Indian architecture. It presupposes the circle and results from it... The circle and curve belong to life in its growth and movement. The square is the mark of order, of finality to the expanding life, its form; and of perfection beyond life and death<sup>54</sup>. In the Hindu temple, it is the square Vēdi which makes the sacred ground. The circular aspect of the earth is left behind, it belongs to the world of appearance and its movement; the earth is beheld itself under the perfection of the heavenly world and, knowing its perfection, is drawn as a square<sup>55</sup>.

The temple, thus, is an ambivalent symbol. By its very structure, it indicates life here on earth, but life that is ordered by divine presence. It also reminds the devotee that it is only through such a life that salvation is possible. The temple brings together in an organic relation *samsara* and *mokṣa*, time and eternity, history and eschatology. The journey to and entry into a temple is also a journey to and hopefully, an entry into heaven. If the journey of our life is to be a *tīrthayatra*, then it calls for concentration, directing all our attention to one goal (*ekagrata*). The *bindu*, the highest point, is symbol of this *ekagrata*<sup>56</sup>.

The symbolic function of the temple will be effective if the devotee personalizes it. He does this by seeing it (*darsana*), going around it (*parikrama*) and entering it (*abhiḡamana*)<sup>57</sup>. By seeing it and going around it the devotee "becomes the outermost perimeter" of the temple<sup>58</sup>. Now the temple is not merely

52 Ibid., 17

53. Ibid., 31.

54 Ibid., 22

55. Ibid., 25.

56. Ibid., 156

57 Some temples have an internal circumambulatory (*andhakārikā*), while others, specially in the South, have an open-air enclosure (*prakāra*). Some big temples have a series of such enclosures. The rite of *parikrama* acquires a spiral form, a step-by-step movement from the outermost to the innermost.

58 Kramrisch 1976, 301.

outside him. He has interiorized it. But this is not enough. He himself must be within the temple, moving to its centre, because the *Garbhagrha* is not only the house of the Germ or embryo of the Temple as *Puruṣa*; it refers to the man who comes to the Centre and attains his new birth in its darkness... The cubical chamber of the *Garbhagrha* is replete with static order. It stands firm. This must be so in a sanctuary, a place for the realisation of the Supreme Principle which is infinite and beyond all limits. (The *garbhagrha* is surrounded by thick walls.) Their thickness shuts off the outer world and keeps secret the interior. Its sacredness is protected from the evil influence of external distractions and from the destructive agents of time and accidents. The greatest possible lastingness is secured for the secluded place in which dwells the eternal present during Pūjā<sup>59</sup>.

Thus the entry into the *garbhagrha* is symbolic of rebirth, for there can be no salvation without being born again<sup>60</sup>. This experience of being born anew is already had when the devotée, before he enters the temple, bathes himself in the pond/lake/river near the temple.

The *garbhagrha* has only one small door. Often to enter it or have a *darsana* of the deity we need to bend. This could have its origin in the cave shrine. However it also serves to evoke the actual womb. Before creation there was only darkness and the womb, like the original cave shrine, is also a dark chamber. This darkness

is a necessary condition for the transformation which is wrought in the devotee...an act of recognition of the God in the potent, superluminous darkness, revealed now and known further in all the images outside on the walls of the temple, of the many gods, the Devas, the shining ones, in the light of day"<sup>61</sup>.

According to the Hindu tradition, saving knowledge and life-giving light are hidden in the darkness<sup>62</sup>. It is only in passing

59 Ibid., 163.

60 This idea, that to be saved we need to be reborn, is already contained in the *Atharva-veda* hymn on the sacred student, which tells us that the teacher becomes pregnant with the student (11. 5. 3).

61 Kramrisch 1976, 163.

62 Shulman, 19. Anand 1991, 31.

through darkness that we come to light. Only when we unlearn all that we have already learnt do we somehow begin to experience the divine mystery.

Many Hindu temples depict a couple in the act of making love (*mithuna*). The temple as a symbol of the universe is also the symbol of the unity and fecundity of the primordial couple: *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*, *Śiva* and *Śakti*. These *mithunas* are more commonly found in solar temples, and hence they may indicate the presence of fertility cult in these temples<sup>63</sup>. An ancient Hindu text says that the joy of final union with God is like the joy experienced by a couple in the act of deep embrace<sup>64</sup>. Thus the different *mithuna* postures are symbolic also of final liberation<sup>65</sup>. They could also be associated with one school of Tāntricism<sup>66</sup>, following which a couple, who had undergone a very rigorous training, aimed at prolonging the sexual union, experienced it as a joyful meditation. As final liberation is the experience of fullness, it will also be a return to the androgynous state that was experienced before the fall<sup>67</sup>.

### Puja from isolation to communion

As Hindu theology developed, the temple-builders tried to make the shrine as complete a symbol as possible of the Divine, and of His many *līlas*. Hence slowly architecture and sculpture advanced. Some temples also have beautiful paintings. In course of time these images, powerful as they were, did not appear dynamic enough. Hence music, dance and drama became part of temple worship. All this served as a mode of catechesis, an instrument of *darsana*. As rich patrons provided funds, more

63 P. Thomas, *Kama Kalpa: The Hindu Ritual of Love* (Bombay, D. B. Taraporewala, 1960) 139–41.

64 *Bṛhadaranyaka-upanīśad*, 6. 3. 21.

65 Kramrisch 1979, 346. However it has also been suggested that the *mithunas* are “basically profane in character”, and “Like the *devadasis* — for whom it might have been a type of advertisement—this sculpture was simply one of the many semi-secular entertainments formerly provided in the temple. D. N. Lorenzen, *The Kapalikas and Kalamukhar: Two Lost Saivite Sects*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1972), p. 139.

66 *Ibid.*, 347.

67 *Bṛhadaranyaka-upanīśad*, 1. 4. 1–3. Punning with the root *pat* (to fall), this text informs us that because the original being fell apart we have *pati* (husband) and *patni* (wife).

and more craftsmen and artists were involved in the temple service<sup>68</sup>. Thus "The foremost monument of Indian art is the temple, and it is the centre of all the arts. It is, moreover, practically the only monument that has survived the ravages of climate, time, and wars"<sup>69</sup>. The temple becomes not only a theological but also a cultural symbol, not merely a dead archeological datum but a living historical continuum. In moments of crisis, the temple becomes the centre for religious renewal.

If the suggestion that the Hindu temple tradition has its roots in the ancient practice of creating a sacred enclosure for community ritual is correct, then the temple is not merely for *darsana*, important though it is. The rite of *puja* also has a pre-Vedic origin<sup>70</sup>. Gradually the temple and *puja* became more important than the Vedic sacrificial altar and *yajna*. The devotee may even request the temple priest to perform a *puja* on his behalf, either as the fulfilment of a vow, or to obtain some special favour. In many temples the *puja* is performed at different times of the day. Besides this daily routine there are special *pujas* and processions to mark the many feasts that punctuate the Hindu calendar. These celebrations are "not so much spiritual as religious, and religious phenomena are a complex of social, economic, recreational and educational processes"<sup>71</sup>. In some temples with a good income common meals are served to the devotees.

Even if the devotee cannot actually participate in these sacred rites, he does so symbolically by receiving the *prasada* or the *tirtha* and thus enters into a sacramental communion not only with the deity, but also with the other devotees. The *prasada* is the food that is consecrated by being offered to the deity. The *tirtha* is the water that has been used to bathe the central icon<sup>72</sup>. The symbolism of the icon and the *puja* performed in its honour not only gives the devotee a feeling of communion, but also serves "as the thread of continuity between

68 M. A. D. Rangaswamy, *The Religion and Philosophy of Tevaram* (Madras, University of Madras, 1958), pp. 11-12.

69 Kramrisch 1983, 253.

70. Anand 1991, 24.

71 Rao 1985, 7.

72 R. B. Pandey, *Hindu Dharmakoś* (Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh Hindi Samsthan., 1978) 299, 426-27.

generations and as the web in which the entire community is enclosed"<sup>73</sup>. The *pūja* is also meant to remind the devotee of his relatedness and indebtedness to the different forces of nature. These too, represented by the many minor deities in the temple complex, are offered food<sup>74</sup>. Thus the *pūja* has a social and ecological dimension, inviting the devotee to broaden his understanding of being social.

As cult becomes powerful it leads to blind faith, which in turn becomes a useful tool in the hands of an exploitative clergy. Hence in the history of every religion which has given great importance to rites and rituals, there have been moments of revolt and rejection. We have this phenomenon in the history of Hinduism too. Basava, the founder of the Liṅgāyata tradition of Karnataka, was very critical of priests, temples and the cult dependent on popular icons<sup>75</sup>. He directed his followers not to visit temples, but to carry on their person the *iṭṭalinga* (a small pebble in the shape of the *liṅga*), and to make it the focus of their prayer and worship<sup>76</sup>. We have so far tried to explain the symbolism of some of the salient features of the process of building the Hindu temple, of the temple as a building and as a centre of religious life. We shall now try to see what a temple or, for that matter, any place of worship can and should mean for us today.

### Darsana: from darkness to light

The devotee undertakes a *tīrthayatra* to the temple because he wants to have a *darśana*. This word, like so many other Sanskrit words, has many different meanings. I indicate a few that will help us to understand what *darsana* can mean for the modern pilgrim: becoming visible, exhibition, looking at, paying a visit to, eye, mirror, system of religious doctrine or philosophical thought, going into the presence of, understanding, discernment<sup>77</sup>. The Hindu tradition has perceived understanding and

73 Rao 1985, Preface (page not numbered).

74 This is the Rite of *bali-harāṇa*. Rao 1981, 57.

75 Basava, *Vacanas of Basavanna*, ed. H. Deveerappa, tr. L. M. A. Menezes & S. M. Angadi (Srigere, Annana Balaga, 1967), 26–37.

76 As the temple and its icon have become so much a characteristic of Hinduism, the question has been raised whether the Liṅgāyata tradition is part of Hinduism. M. R. Sakhare, *History and Philosophy of Liṅgāyat Religion* (Dharwar, Karnatak University, rep. 1978) 425–39.

77 Apte, 247.

discernment as the path to freedom (*mokṣa*)<sup>78</sup>. Thus *darsana* is always *mokṣa-śāstra*, the science that leads to freedom, for freedom can come only from understanding. The traditionally religious Hindu would be uncomfortable with the idea of knowledge for its own sake. That, I am afraid, is part of our contemporary academic culture, a culture which promotes competition, and so makes much of general-knowledge contests.

Authentic knowledge should lead to understanding. When one ancient seer began his instruction, he told his disciple that she — that disciple was his own wife — should see, listen to, think about and internalize the Self (*ātman*)<sup>79</sup>. This admonition seems to find a ritual expression in the performance of the *ārati* (waving of light before the icon). After the priest has honoured the icon he comes out to the devotees with the *arati* lamp. They hold their palms over the flame for a moment and then touch their eyes, ears, forehead (mind) and chest (heart). Understanding comes only with internalizing, when what is seen, heard, and reflected upon enters the heart. Going around the temple and the *garbhagrha* is a process of gathering into oneself, of internalizing the shrine and all it is meant to enshrine.

The temple is built as an exhibition (*darśana*) or, better still, expression of devotion (*bhakti*), and it is the becoming visible (*darśana*) of the Invisible, the concretisation of the Ultimate, the icon of God. These two movements: God becoming visible to us and our response to Him in devotion are inter-related. If the temple is to somehow express the divine mystery, its majesty and beauty, then the person who gives shape to it must be more than a skilled craftsman. He must also be, in some ways at least, a mystic who has personally experienced what he is trying to express in signs and symbols. This inner experience must guide him so that, when he completes his work, he himself will exclaim with wonder: "Oh, how was it that I built it"<sup>80</sup>. The craftsman needs to be supported by a community.

78 *Maitri-upanīśad*, 6. 34. *Bhagavad-gītā*, 4. 16; 9. 28.

79 *Bṛhadaranyaka-upanīśad*, 2. 4. 5; 4. 5. 6. The word *ātman* has been used both for God, who then is seen as the Supreme Self, and for oneself. This ambiguity is not without its importance, as we shall see later.

80 A copper-plate inscription of a king of the Rastrakuta Dynasty (which ruled from about the middle of the eighth to the middle of the tenth century A. D.). Quoted by Kramrisch 1976, 8.

Hence the mystic craftsman must belong to a deeply religious community. Then the temple becomes the theology, an effort to share with others one's own contemplation, both of the craftsman and of his community. Only then do we have a real icon, an image of the Imageless, a sign (*liṅga*) of the Signless. Otherwise we have only an idol, a god who is a fiction of our imagination.

Because a temple is an expression of *bhakti*, it cannot be the result of some violence through which we have hurt others physically or emotionally. It is certainly never a demonstration of political power or communal vindictiveness. It is not built to evade taxes. The money needed to build it is not acquired through dishonesty or exploitation, or donated by people who are guilty of such behaviour. It is not meant to attract devotees and start some pilgrim tradition. All the great temples of our land were built on sites that were already sacred (*tirtha*) either because of their scenic beauty or due to some mythological association<sup>81</sup>. In fact, we have noted that some temples were actually built over an icon, or even some rock or stump of wood already held in veneration for generations. If a temple or a place of worship is really an icon it will, in due time, attract many pilgrims. Otherwise, at the most, it may be a tourist attraction.

In entering a temple the devotee desires to come into the presence (*darsana*) of God. Once Pārvatī tried to come into the presence of Śiva, but Śiva, in deep meditation, was sitting with his eyes closed<sup>82</sup>. To come into somebody's presence is not merely a physical act. Presence is realized only when one becomes aware that one is taken note of by the other. When Pārvatī is taken note of by Śiva, she is favourably accepted by Him. She receives the grace (*anugraha*) of God<sup>83</sup>. She then experiences a profound sense of belonging to Him. She is reborn as the spouse of Siva. But Siva looks not only at me as an individual, but also at his whole creation which he sustains by his 'seeing'. On another occasion Parvati tried playfully to

81 D. L. ECK, *Darśan: Seeing the Divine Image in India* (Chambersburg, Anima Publications, 1981) 48–50.

82 For the full story see *Śiva-purāṇa*, *Rudra-saṃhitā* *Pārvatī-khaṇḍa*, 17–19.

83 The word *anugraha* is formed by adding the prefix *anu* (favourably) to the noun *graha* (acceptance).

close Siva's eyes, and then the whole world began to crumble. Śiva mercifully opened his third eye<sup>84</sup>. God is the Unwinking One (*animiṣa*)<sup>85</sup>, and were He to close His eyes creation would return to the primordial chaos. Thus the divine *darsana* is responsible for the continuity of the cosmos, and the temple is a ritual of humankind participating in this process of keeping the order and harmony that keeps the cosmos from becoming a chaos. But *darsana* also means a mirror. Thus while *darsana* is a vision and understanding of God (ĀTMAN), it should also lead the human person to a deeper awareness of oneself (*ātman*). For only then a rebirth is possible. But real theology is also sound anthropology. What, then, is the rebirth we need today? What kind of understanding of God and of humanity can make sense to contemporary man, and help him to survive inspite of all the forces of violence that are so powerful as to make him feel helpless?

### **Moksa: from bondage to freedom**

The ritual of building a temple is a ritual of re-creating the world. Underlying this mentality is the ancient principle of sympathy, a principle that was operative not only in primal religions but also in Vedic rituals. Our ancestors believed that by imitating the cosmic process in a ritual framework they could not only ensure the continuity of this process but also improve upon it. Thus they hoped to ensure the harmony of the different forces at work in nature, to get the many Devas and Devīs to work together for our happiness. We feel safe and secure when life is experienced in a certain rhythm. The rite of building a temple begins with *garbhadhana*, and this presupposes a favourable season (*ṛtu*). The temple-architecture has a certain rhythm (*ṛta*), a rhythm that imitates the rhythm man experiences within himself.

Slowly we realize that just as there is a dynamic rhythm in nature so too there should be a dynamic rhythm in society (*dharma*). This happens when different members of the society work in harmony for the good of all. Gradually comes the realisation that ritual activity, necessary as it is, is not enough to

84 *Mahābhārata*, 13. 127. 43-44.

85 Apte, 19.

ensure *rta* and *dharma*. We need to be actively involved in the world<sup>86</sup>. This new insight questions the sharp distinction, more sophisticated religious traditions tend to make between the sacred and the profane, between the sanctuary and what is outside it. For the primal sages the whole universe was holy, and the sacred enclosure was not the negation but the concentration of the sanctity and beauty of the universe. Sacred rites were meant to ensure happiness here on this earth.

The temple is not only an icon of God but also a symbolic replica of His beautiful creation. Thus, the building of a temple is a commitment to work for a healthy natural environment (*rta*) and a just society (*dharma*). Today we are all becoming more and more conscious of the need to ensure the ecological balance. However ecology is not merely a question of physical survival. It is the guarantee of our humanness. The original sacred enclosure was a point where the tribals experienced powerfully the frightening majesty and the fascinating beauty of creation, and therefore of the Creator. Thus we need nature to remain human beings who are capable of some depth experience.

Our society, which glorifies the knowledge of data, tends to consider the tribals as less cultured, but it is the tribal who is really the wise one. That is why he can experience nature as a humanizing mother. All of us "were tribals once upon a time", but our tragedy is that "we managed to become increasingly sophisticated and leave behind our tribal stage"<sup>87</sup>. The visit to a temple is a call to be reborn, a call to be a child again. The tribal represents the childhood of humanity. We need to realize the importance of the existing tribals and their survival for the future of humanity. Our technological culture can give us knowledge, but knowledge without wisdom is manipulative and in the long run suicidal. Knowledge enables us to control others, but wisdom empowers us to surrender ourselves for others. We can, and we very badly need to receive a lot of wisdom from our tribals.

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86 This is the main message of the *Bhagavad-gītā*. S. Anand, "Contemplation and Secular Involvement", *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection*, XLVII (1983) 240-49.

87 Rao 1980, 10.

The task of re-creating the world is a call to struggle for justice (*dharma*), and thus we become like God, His living image<sup>88</sup>. The human society then becomes a real temple, an icon of God. God makes no discrimination<sup>89</sup>. He dwells alike in the so-called high caste Brahmin and the supposedly low caste Shudra, and even in the outcast<sup>90</sup>. Thus every human being is a temple, an image and a dwelling of God. Hence any form of discrimination and exploitation is a sacrilege. By visiting a temple the devotee hopes to receive *darsana*, enlightenment, and enlightenment brings us freedom (*mokṣa*). It liberates us from a narrow way of looking and gives us a new vision (*darsana*). The enlightened person makes no distinction between a holy Brahmin and a dog-eating outcast<sup>91</sup>. The truly enlightened person rejects the caste system, and all other unjust structures, due to which so many in our country are the victims of religious, cultural, social and economic violence.

Even though Basava rejected the temple tradition, he insisted on the practice of *prasāda*<sup>92</sup>. One of the most insisted upon caste taboos is eating with members of other castes, and avoiding food cooked or even touched by them. Hence, the *prasada*, as a sharing of food without being concerned as to who cooked it, is a symbolic rejection of all forms of discrimination<sup>93</sup>. We can also look at this from another point of view. One of the functions of the temple is to provide a symbolic *axis mundi*, a firm prop that will ensure stability. The only stable reality we all share is our humanity. It alone can be the real — and not merely symbolic — unmovable *axis mundi*, providing us the stability and open space necessary for organic growth.

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88 The Lord enters our history precisely when *dharma* is threatened (*Bhagavad-gita*, 4. 7). The word *dharma* originally does not mean religion as it is normally understood in English. P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, 5 vols. (Poona, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, rev. ed. 1968–75); vol. I. p. 1.

89 *Bhagavata-purana*, 1. 9. 21; 6. 17. 22; 11. 11. 5.

90 *ibid.*, 3. 29. 16; 5. 5. 26; 11. 19. 21.

91 *Bhagavad-gita*, 5. 18.

92 Pandey, 427.

93 At the Vitthal shrine in Pandharpur, devotees put food into one another's mouth at the conclusion of one of their prayer meetings. T. Dabre, *The God-experience of Tukaram: A Study in Religious Symbolism* (Pune, Jnanadeepa Vidyapeetha, 1987) 101.

Everyone who participates in this humanity is concretising this *axis mundi*. Hence all forms of discrimination and exploitation are shaking the very foundations of human survival.

Woman is the greatest victim of all kinds of injustice and violence. Yet, if we have a real *darsana* of the temple, then we will realize that it is she who is primary in God's creation. God's power (*śakti*) pervades the universe and keeps it going. The beautiful damsels that adorn the temple walls represent this *śakti*. The *garbhagṛha* is the most central part of the temple. But the original *garbhagrha* is the womb of our mother. Hence doing violence to a helpless woman is a greater crime than bringing down a mosque or destroying a temple. A society that tolerates violence towards women is also a society that is blind to ecological violence.

On the other hand, to be in the *garbhagṛha* is to be in the presence not only of God, but of God who is our Mother, for only then is rebirth possible. According to the Hindu tradition we are truly reborn through wisdom, the gift of the Goddess Sarasvatī<sup>94</sup>. The woman is more close to the earth than man is. The earth is the primary symbol and icon of God, and the temple is only its miniature. Hence woman is the primary symbol-discoverer and icon-maker, and the best icon she makes is the human person she shapes for about nine months in the original *garbhagrha*, and like God she takes material for this creation from within herself. Hence I am inclined to believe that woman will be a better liturgist than man. Then our liturgy will be more spontaneous and yet symbolic and less cerebral and conceptual.

But why is there so much discrimination, exploitation and violence in our society? The temple is built on the *vīstu*, which is the remainder — and also a reminder — of the sacrifice (*yajña*). The *yajña* is performed to ensure *ṛta*, and so for the welfare of all. It symbolizes a concern for the greater whole of which I am only a small part, and my own welfare is guaranteed by the welfare of all. Thus originally *yajña* had a positive content.

94 The word *sarasvatī* is formed by adding the possessive suffix *vat* to the noun *saras* which itself is derived from the root *śṛ* (to flow). Hence originally *sarasvatī* indicates a river (flowing water). Water is a fairly universal womb symbol.

However, we soon realize that concern for others is not possible without a certain degree of self-denial. It is precisely this acceptance of self-denial as an essential component of human life which has become an outdated concept for contemporary consumer society. The moment we eat before feeding others we become thieves<sup>95</sup>!

Another reason for the unjust situation in which we find ourselves is that we have become victims of unhealthy secularisation. The secular, no doubt, has a certain legitimate autonomy, but the *kirtimukha* and the square form, both so prominent in temple architecture, remind us that the secular is not absolute. It is this absolutization of the secular and the pushing out of God from our day to day life, even though we may claim to be religious, that ultimately explains why we become consumers. Consumerism is the malaise of a society that has effectively lost transcendence. Part of our consumerism is that sex too has lost its sacredness. It is as easily available as any other commodity in our modern consumer market. The *mithunas* remind us that sex is a religious reality: the encounter of man and woman is symbolic of and a way to the androgynous God.

The concept of *tirthayatra* is very much associated with temple religiosity. But then the whole life of man is a journey, a journey into the unknown. Hence the true devotee does not take his own religious institutions for granted, but examines them critically. He and the religious community and institution to which he belongs, is called to be born again, to look at life afresh. This is also suggested by the fact that the temple is symbolic in character. A symbol, while having a certain inbuilt identity, is sufficiently polyvalent and, at times, also ambivalent. History is a witness to the fact that this fluid character of a symbol can be exploited by a powerful group to legitimize its exploitative authority. The symbol can also become opium for the exploited. The symbol is only a symbol, and in our *tirthayatra* we need to go beyond it, for *darsana* also means going into the presence of God and experience this presence more directly. We need to critique the tendency of temple religiosity to keep people religiously infantile. The temple's highest point is the *bindu*, and

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95 *Bhagavad-gita*, 3.12.

this leads us "to the one point which is even beyond its own shape"<sup>96</sup>. This is a call to contemplative prayer (*darsana*).

The universe, of which the temple is a miniature, is the result of God looking away from Himself, of His moving towards the other, of His desire to overcome His original loneliness<sup>97</sup>. The temple, thus is a call to dialogue with others. The temple itself is a dialogue in stone, a meeting of the folk and the classical, a synthesis of the different religious traditions that go to make Hinduism. No wonder, it has so many names. The polyvalent character of symbols calls for dialogue. When people with different backgrounds experience a symbol they bring out its riches. Dialogue can also make us aware of the exploitative use we tend to make of symbols. Dialogue too is a *tirthayatra*, and all of us are trying to enter the one and only door of the *garbhagrha*. Truth is that door. It is also the goal<sup>98</sup>. Truth is One, but precisely because we are still pilgrims we have not yet arrived at it fully. We need to become co-travellers.

In reflecting on the significance of the Hindu temple, I have tried to put together some ideas that I consider important for us today, ideas that may be part of a critique of our traditional religion and modern culture, both of which have powerfully enslaving elements. I do not claim to have presented a complete system of theology or philosophy (*darsana*) relevant for our times, and I think that is not needed. It is my hope that we all have a deep contemplative experience (*darsana*) of the Divine, an experience that will effect a *punarjanma*, a rebirth for ourselves as individuals and as a religious community. From this will follow not merely a theology that is relevant for our times, but also — and this is more important — the prophetic vision (*darśana*) we need.

Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth  
Pune

Subhash Anand

96 Kramrisch 1976, 156.

97 *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad*, 1. 4. 1.

98 Gandhi makes a distinction between relative — by which he means partial — truth and Absolute Truth, and insists that it is by living truth as already present that we will attain the full Truth. M. K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (Ahmedbad, Javajivan Pub. House, 14th rep., n. d.) xi

# The Mosque in Islam

## Its Religious and Political Role

As a place of prostration a mosque is believed to represent all such places everywhere and so symbolizes the emotional and ideological integration of the islamic community. This significance is the result of a process of development whose history the article traces from the building of the first mosque to the present time. In course of this history the mosque assumes various roles: it is a house of prayer, a place of public assembly, the seat of administration, a court of justice, even the headquarters of military operations in times of war. The sermon preached on Friday afternoons allows the mosque to exercise a political role. Although the sermons are highly formalized they can be used to convey important political messages or proclaim politico-religious crusades in the Muslim world today.

The word *masjid* (mosque) emerges from *s-g-d* meaning to prostrate oneself<sup>1</sup>. Prostration, the outstanding act of humility and adulation before God, is valued as the quality of a true Muslim (Q. 48:29; 19:58; 16:48-49; 13:15), and reckoned as the distinction between sincere, loyal, obedient and submissive angels, and the proud, disobedient and rebellious Satan. A *masjid* as a place of prostration represents the whole network of similar locations and is, thus, considered to symbolize the emotional and ideological integration of the whole community<sup>2</sup>. It engulfs all Muslims in fraternal unity and solidarity calling them to shun

1 H. A. R. Gibb and J. H. Kramers (ed.), *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*, (E. J. Brill, Leiden, 1974), pp. 330-354.

2 Thomas Patrick Hughes, *Dictionary of Islam: Being a Cyclopaedia of the Doctrines, Rites, Ceremonies, and Customs, together with the Technical and Theological Terms, of the Muhammadan Religion*, (Cosmo Publications, New Delhi 1986), pp. 329-346; Muhammad Baqir Ansari, "The Role of the Mosque in Islam", *Al Tawhid*, 1 (1984, July 4, No. 4) Dr. Syed Mahmudul Hasan, *Dacca the City of Mecca*, (Islamic Foundation Bangladesh, Dacca, 1981).

worldly affairs at those times when they must absorb themselves in devotional pursuits for spiritual upliftment, and reminds all of them to bear witness to monotheism and Islam. Hence, the entire area of a mosque including the grounds and the walls are hallowed and must be shielded from all material and spiritual defilement, especially idolatry (cf. Q. 9:28, 17)<sup>3</sup>. However, this significance of the mosque did not always prevail.

From the time of Mohammed (cf. Q. 2:144, 149; 5:2; 8:34; 17:1; 22:40; 18:21 etc.) to that of Ibn Khaldun, *masjid* represented all places of worship, not only a Muslim house for paying homage to God. While at Mecca, Mohammed, having no exclusive place for adoration, prayed anywhere and in secret, believing that the humility communicated in the *salat* (ritual prayer) can be signified anywhere. Hence, one tradition says that Mohammed was given the whole world as a mosque while earlier prophets were granted only churches and synagogues, and another teaching asserts,

Wherever the hour of prayer overtakes thee, thou shalt perform the *salat* and that is a *masjid*<sup>4</sup>.

The first mosque was built towards the end of *hegira* at Kuba shortly before Mohammed erected the main mosque of Medina on a site covered with ruins, graves and palm trees. The land was cleared and surrounded by a low mud enclosure with rooms for Mohammed's wives along one wall. Hence, this mosque which became the basic model for all future mosques was also regarded as an extension of Mohammed's house, a place of assembly not sanctified by any specifically dedicated ritual object, and used for any laudable purpose: community worship, discussion of religious and worldly affairs, planning future conquests and furnishing vital information, treating wounded fighters of the Aws tribe, confining prisoners of war, dispatching delegations to distant places, receiving representatives of governments and tribes, putting up tents to accommodate guests and visitors, presenting gifts to Mohammed, issuing appeals

3 Muhammad Baqir Ansari, *op. cit.*

4 H. A. R. Gibb and J. H. Kramers (ed.), *op. cit.*; Samuel Zwemer, *Across the World of Islam: Studies in Aspects of the Mohammedan Faith and in the Awakening of the Muslim Multitudes*, (Fleming H. Revell Company, New York), pp. 154ff.

for obedience to God and proclamations for religious edification, for pronouncing state policy, and for regulating the social life of the community. Mohammed even allowed a Sudanese or Abyssinian group to perform their rite in the mosque with shield and lance on the occasion of a festival<sup>5</sup>.

After Mohammed it was customary to constitute a mosque at the center of the army camp next to the tent or residence of the commander in chief. Such mosques were open quadrangles marked off by a trench, later replaced by a reed fence which was in turn displaced by a low wall made of mud bricks baked in the sun. The quadrangle itself was the bare earth later covered with pebbles, then mats, marble slabs and carpets. With additional conquests and mass conversion to Islam, churches were either converted into mosques, or shared with Christians for worship as in Hims and Dabil, an innovation legitimized with a saying of Mohammed,

"Perform thy *salat* in them: it will not harm thee"<sup>6</sup>.

Immense reverence for Mohammed, his family and companions soon ensured special significance and sanctity for those places where Mohammed and his companions were born, lived, prayed and held meetings. Later, mosques were built over them. Churches associated with Quranic biblical figures also acquired sanctity and were turned into mosques. And sites associated with Muslim religious history were also turned into mosques, for instance, the ruins of the Jerusalem temple (the first Muslim Kibla) was also associated with Mohammed's ascension into heaven and turned into the famed Al-masdjid al-aksa (The Farthest Mosque). These mosques derived their sanctity from their association with the Prophet, his family and companions, and the Quranic prophets<sup>7</sup>.

And when Mohammed's mosque in Medina was enlarged to incorporate his grave located in the room of Ayseha, his

5 H. A. R. Gibb and J. H. Kramers (ed.), *op. cit.*; Muhammad Baqir Ansari, *op. cit.*; Mohammed Makki Sibai, *Mosque Libraries: An Historical Survey* (Mansell Publishing Ltd, London, 1987), pp. 15ff.; Asghar Fathi, "The Social and Political Functions of the Mosque in the Muslim Community", *Islamic Culture*, 58 (1984, No. 3), pp. 189-199. Kemal A. Faruki, *Islam Today and Tomorrow*, (Pakistan Publishing House, Karachi - 1, 1974), pp. 76ff.

6 H. A. R. Gibb and J. H. Kramers (ed.), *op. cit.*

7 *Ibid.*

youngest and favorite wife, the stage was set for turning the tombs of saints, and ancient sanctuaries into mosques with the holy tomb sanctifying the mosque. Subsequently, people were advised to pray in mosques in the proximity of holy tombs even though many traditions opposed this novelty:

"*Salat* at the graves is *makruh*"

"Sit not upon graves and perform not *salat* towards them"

"Hold the *salat* in your houses, but do not use them as tombs"

"On his death-bed Mohammed cursed the Jews and the Christians because they used the tombs of their prophets as *masjids*"

These traditions were explained away as prohibiting only exaggerated reverence for the dead and the using of tombs as *kiblas*. In time mosques themselves appropriated the sanctity of the holy dead and began to sanctify adjoining tombs. They became the houses of God (*bait Allah*) akin to the *kaaba*, the points where prayers are heard, spiritual centers that urge Muslims in every place and time to remain attached to Islam, and centers of pilgrimage. Hence the saying,

In cities and settlements the most lovable to God are the mosques and the most hateful, the market place.

And believers were counseled to abstain from entering mosques at random: They were influenced to secure purity, ritually to abide by new rules like taking off footwear and entering the mosque with the right foot, and to abstain from spitting, shaving, and selling wine inside the mosque. Further, the construction of new mosques became particularly rewarding

"for him who builds a mosque, God will build a home in Paradise"<sup>8</sup>.

However, the mosque also endured as a place of public assembly. Kings and commoners frequented the mosque for a variety of reasons: The first Umayyad Caliph visited the mosque to chat with his physician. Wedding contracts and divorces were publicly finalized in the mosque. Gifted speakers told popular and entertaining stories that imparted a lesson. Students studied and lived in the mosque for years and young apprentices

8 *Ibid.*; Mohammad Manzoor Nomani, *Meaning and Message of the Traditions* Vol. 2, Mohammad Asif Kidwai (tr.), (Academy of Islamic Research Hasan, Dacca the City of Mecca.

were taught their trade there. Mosques were also places where barren women searched for a miracle, people took shelter from military and natural calamities, and mystics performed religious exercises and withdrew into retreat. Business continued with the selling of water, food and the wares of hawkers. And strangers had the right to sit, chat, eat and spend the night in the mosque. Hence, the mosque combined a church, a school, and a hostel with attached lavatories, wells, bakeries, kitchens, an extensive maintenance staff, medical personnel and tailors<sup>9</sup>.

In Mohammed's life time and for a period after his death, the mosque was also the seat of government represented in such closeness between the mosque and the ruler's dwelling (e. g. Medina, al Fustat, Damascus Basra and Kufa) that any enlargement of the mosque resulted in the incorporation of the house of the ruler into the mosque, e. g. Medina, al Fustat and al Basra. The mosque was also the place where the State treasure chest was kept until modern times. Further, the ruler and his governors made their normal entry into office by sitting on the *minbar* (the pulpit) of the main mosque (*Jama Masjid*) of the capital and the principal provincial towns where they were appointed leaders of the *salat*, the military and the administration of justice; and given the right to use the *minbar* to deliver the *khutba* (sermon), proclaim official policy, administer justice, curse and denounce enemies, and receive the oath of allegiance from their subjects (e. g. Abu Bakr and his successors). Consequently the mosque saw many violent encounters with people riding into it and shouting at or stoning the ruler or his delegate sitting on the *minbar*, e. g. Zayed. The mosque also served in times of war: It was the rallying point for gaining support for major military decisions with pledges to support with men and weapons in battle and during revolts, the place where councils of war were held, the results of battles and military campaigns announced, captured booty was sent for safe keeping, and the location where the army assembled before marching to battle<sup>10</sup>.

In the course of time, however, the actual work of government was transferred to the *diwan*, negotiations and

9 H. A. R. Gibb and J. H. Kramers (ed.), *op. cit.*; Mohammad Makki Sibai, *op. cit.*

10. *Ibid*

business were conducted in the *Kasr al imara*, justice was dispensed in *madjlis al-hukms*, and the palace was located away from the mosque. But since the ruler still led the *salat* and gave the sermon, special balconies in and beside the mosque were built for his use. Later, the Caliph disconnected the leading of the prayer and the giving of the sermon from political office by appointing an *imam* to lead the congregation in prayer, and a skilled propagandist as preacher (*khatib*). The sermons also came to be preached only on Friday afternoons. However, these sermons while being religious retained their political character by disseminating the political views of the ruler, eliciting oaths of allegiance from those converted to the ruler's views, and calling down blessing on the Caliph, his heir, and the local ruler (omission of any of these names meant death, abdication or removal from power) while cursing their enemies. The sermons also announced the appointment of important officers, the deaths of distinguished governors, the orders of the ruler, edicts on taxation, and the results of battles. Finally, they defended government policy and stirred up public emotions. Consequently, people trooped to the mosque to hear official announcements<sup>11</sup>.

In addition to the principal mosque, there existed already in Mohammed's time small tribal mosques symbolizing the independence of the tribes. These mosques together with the later private mosques were and still are the pivot points of cultural, spiritual and social movements, places for denouncing government policy and stirring up emotions and revolts and, hence, sources of disruption in the Muslim community. Mohammed demolished one tribal mosque at Kuba for what the Quran condemns as bringing disunity among Muslims (Q. 9:108ff.). Even in later times mosques used by the political opposition were destroyed, for instance, al-Muqtadhir ordered the destruction of the Baratha Mosque patronized by the Shia of Baghdad because he heard that they used it to curse the first four Caliphs and to conspire against the reigning one. And it was not uncommon to have mosques partially or completely closed in order to curb public unrest. Even today rulers try to control public political consensus by employing

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11 *Ibid.*

the *imams* and *khatibs* of mosques<sup>12</sup>, for instance, Egypt declared in December 1992 that all mosques, however small, have to be administered by government appointed *imams*, before launching a massive military operation against fundamentalists in Cairo.

The *khutba*, thus, seems to be the major method by which the principal and private mosques continued to retain their political function after the formal break between the position of *imam* of the mosque and the leading political office<sup>13</sup>. It consists of two consecutive stereotyped sermons delivered by the *imam* of a mosque or a *khatib* appointed by him at the Friday afternoon community prayer. Its form is set by the practice of the Prophet, the first four Caliphs and the scholars of Islam. The first sermon is longer and consists of praising God and Mohammed, a substantive part and a conclusion that refers to Tradition and/or the Quran. The second sermon involves calling down the blessing of God on Mohammed, his family and all Muslims, and also ends with a reference to the Traditions and/or the Quran. Both sermons are punctuated with numerous prayer formulae and restricted in terms of loudness, intonation, choice of illustration etc. Yet this formalized speech conveys effectively important political messages in the modern Muslim world<sup>14</sup>.

For instance, the substantive part of the first sermon of a *Khutba* that is expected to deal with Mohammed's night journey and ascent into heaven (the *miraj*, cf. Q. 17:1) begins with a brief outline of the traditional account highlighting the disbelief of nonbelievers and the faith of the believers.

12 *Ibid.*; Asghar Fathi, "The Social and Political Functions of the Mosque in the Muslim Community"; Asghar Fathi, "The Culture and Social Structure of the Islamic Pulpit as a Medium of Communication in the Iranian Constitutional Revolution", *Islamic Culture*, 61(1987, No. 4), pp. 28-45.

13 *Ibid.*

14 Richard T. Antoun, *Muslim Preacher in the Modern World: A Jordanian Case Study in Comparative Perspective*, (Princeton Univ. Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1989); Hazrat Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanawi (compiler), *Juma ke Khutbe: Collection of Sacred Congregational Sermons Delivered on eve of Fridays and Eidain including Sermons of Holy Prophet (Sal'am)*, (Dini Book Depot, Delhi); Ibn al-Jawzi, *Kitab al-Qussas Wa'l-Mudhakkirin*, Merlin S. Swartz (tr.), (Dar el-Machreq Editeurs, Beyrouth, Librairie Orientale, Beyrouth, Liban); Hilal al-Sabi, *Rusum 'Dar al-Khilafah (The Rules and Regulations of the 'Abbasid Court)*, Elie A. Salem (tr.), (Lebanese Commission for the Translation of Great Works, Beirut, 1977), pp. 111ff.

Oh worshipers of God, oh ye who follow the path of the Messenger of God, on the morning after the night journey, the Messenger of God, may God bless and grant him salvation, said to Umm Hani, the daughter of his uncle, Abu Talib, while he was in her house after the night journey: *"Oh Umm Hani, I prayed the last supper prayer with you in this valley, then I was taken [by God] to Jerusalem and I prayed there. Then I returned and prayed in your house the noon prayer."* Umm Hani said, *"Dont tell people what you've told me or they'll call you a liar"*. The Messenger of God said: *"I shall tell them and God will safeguard me from the people."* She grabbed his gown so that he could not leave. But the Messenger loosened his gown from her [grip]; then he left for the Ka'bah and stood with courage between it and Nadwa Valley and called the clans of the Qurash. They hastened toward him and surrounded him and said: *"What's the matter, Muhammad?"* He said, *"God took me with him on a Night Journey"*. They said, *"Where?"* He said, *"To Jerusalem"*. They said, *"And you returned in one night?"* Muhammad said, *"Yes"*. They were taken aback and astonished and said to him, *"Are you telling us that you made this trip in one night when it takes our caravans two months?"* He said to them: *"My Lord is all-powerful."* They said, *"Your story is astonishing. Your deeds before this were trivial. But today what you have said is bad and what you have perpetrated is prattle."* Some of his relatives felt sorry for him and some of the Muslims recanted and some men were fascinated by his account. Abu Bakr did not recant and repeated his words: *"I believe, I believe, oh Messenger of God."*<sup>15</sup>

Once this partial and cursory summary is narrated, the preacher is free to draw spiritual, theological, ethical, social, developmental and/or political implications for today by frequently alluding to Muslim history. If he wishes to highlight the political implications, then presuming that the listeners know the whole traditional account of the journey to Jerusalem and the ascension, he could ask, why did the ascent into heaven take place from Jerusalem only after leading all the Jewish prophets in community

15 Richard T. Antoun, *op. cit.*, p. 219.

worship, and not directly from Mecca? Then proceed to answer the question by asserting the Quranic belief that the Jews disbelieved and killed their prophets. Consequently, God wanted to demonstrate the transfer of prophecy from the Jews to the Muslims while confirming that all prophets come from and pray to the same God, and proclaim the same one religion of submission to God, Islam. Hence, Palestine is the land of Islam. And the sacred spot (the ruins of the Jerusalem temple, now the al-masjid al-aksa), that was once the Muslim direction of prayer, the place for Mohammed's ascension, and the beginning of his mission to the world cannot be left in the hands of the Zionists. The plan for reclaiming Jerusalem for Islam is presented by saying that the same insight convinced Salah al-Din of the need for Muslim unity in order to defeat the Crusades. Hence, it is not surprising that he first fought the Muslims in order to bring all of them under one flag before eliminating the Crusaders with every means provided by God at his time: trickery, cunning, courage, technology, and amnesty. Muslims then, he may conclude, are the sons of Islam created for *jihad* and struggle. *Jihad* is the road of glory and honor, and the most illustrious part of the faith because the happy life is not for this world but the next. The succeeding second sermon may go like this:

God, make Islam and the Muslims victorious. God make Islam and the Muslims victorious. God, make Islam and the Muslims victorious. Good God, support the power of Islam. And destroy the cunning unbelievers. Good God, make victorious all who walk in his path in order to raise the banner of Muhammad. may God bless and grant him salvation!<sup>16</sup>.

However a political sermon need not necessarily be a call to violence as seen in the Friday *Khutba* of the *imam* of the *Jama Masjid* in Delhi on the Friday immediately after the demolition of the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya.

The Shahi Imam of Jama Masjid Syed Abdullah Bukhari today appealed to the Muslim, especially the youth to exercise restraint and patience in view of the surcharged atmosphere all over the country. He said all right thinking secular people of the country were with them ... the Imam

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16 *Ibid.*, p. 227.

said, a sensible and responsible approach at this crucial juncture was the need of the hour. The safety of innocent lives was the most important and any emotional outburst could endanger the lives, the Imam cautioned... The Imam said, his endeavour, as a responsible leader, was to help restore normalcy in the city though he was pained, as every Muslim was, over the events in Ayodhya on Dec. 6 and the subsequent violent incidents all over the country.

He demanded why the government did not take measures to safeguard the disputed site soon after the National Integration Council meeting. The Central Government got going only after the structure there was demolished and the authorities were ineffective for more than a day. The Imam said... *"Our dream was shattered on Dec. 6 and all laws and strong secular ties were blown up"*... He added the Muslims were not against the temple in Ayodhya and said the present generation could not be held responsible for the mistake which took place 400 years back...

*"When the hearts of Muslims are filled with anguish and outrage the government was trying to extinguish the volcano by bullets"*, the Imam stated while expressing sorrow over the killing of hundreds of innocent people every day in the country.

Earlier, the Imam's son Ahmed Bukhari addressed the people and aired the same views and urged the youth not to come out on streets in the wake of acts of provocation by communal outfits. He expressed concern over the happenings in Bombay, Bhopal and Kanpur.

Most of the residents offered 'namaaz' at their rooftops as curfew restrictions were on<sup>17</sup>.

Vidyajyoti  
Delhi

Desiderio Pinto

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17 *The Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, Saturday, December 12, 1992, p. 5.

# **The Temple of Jerusalem**

## **Its Religious and Political Role in the History of Israel**

No temple has played as significant a role in the history of its people as the temple of Jerusalem. For a thousand years it was the principal or the only place of worship of its people. Built by Solomon as part of a programme to secure legitimation for his monarchy, the temple played both a religious and a political role in Israel's history. Religiously it fostered the sedenterization of Yahweh, and the sacralization of Yahweh's community. It turned the dynamic Lord of history of tribal Israel, into the transcendent God of the post exilic-community, accessible only through cult; and it transformed a federation of tribes united by a concern for ethical righteousness into an elite community of the 'separated', pre-occupied with ritual purity. Politically the temple offered legitimation to the emergent monarchy, and with its disappearance, to the priestly class that took over its power. Although the temple was a great symbol of Jewish identity, which helped to bring the loose federation of Israelite tribes into the unity of a people, and helped this people to re-group after the catastrophe of the Exile, it was unable to prevent, and indeed was in part responsible for the inflation of cult and the hardening of purity rules which marked Jewish religion at the time of Jesus.

A temple to Yhwh stood in Jerusalem for more than a thousand years on the site now occupied by the "Dome of the Rock", the magnificent mosque built by the Umayyad Caliphs in 691 C.E.<sup>1</sup> Except for a short break during the Babylonian Exile of the Jewish people (587-536 B. C. E.) it stood there from its first construction by Solomon about 950 B. C. E. (1 Kgs 5-9) to

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1 For a concise history of the Jerusalem temple, see Richard M. Mackowski, *Jerusalem: City of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans) 114-115; K. Roubos, "Biblical Institutions" in A. S. van der Woude (ed.), *The World of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986) 376-80.

its final destruction by the Romans in 70 C. E. In the course of this long history the temple at Jerusalem underwent many and sometimes dramatic changes. The temple built by Solomon was destroyed in 587 B. C. E. by the Babylonians, who took Jerusalem, razed the city, and led its nobility into exile in Babylon. It was rebuilt by Zerubbabel some 70 years later (ca. 520 B. C. E.), when the exiles came home from Babylon into what was now a province of the Persian empire (Ezra 3-6). That this rebuilding took place with the permission of the Persian kings (Cyrus and Darius), and with notable financial support from them (Ezra 1: 1-4; 6:1-12), is an overlooked example of 'Indo-Aryan' tolerance, which contrasts strikingly with the intolerance towards other cults consistently demonstrated by the Semitic and now semitising religions, which have shown themselves more adept at destroying the temples of 'idolators', than in helping to build them.

Zerubbabel's Temple was plundered and desecrated by Antiochus Epiphanes IV in 169-167 B. C. E. (Dan 9.27; 11:31). But it was cleansed and re-dedicated some three years later (164 B. C. E.) by Judas Maccabeus at the conclusion of his successful revolt against the Seleucids (1 Macc 4:36-59), an event still celebrated in the Jewish feast of Dedication (Hanukkah), the Jewish Divali, or feast of lights. In spite of mounting pressures of Hellenism and the increasing control of the Jewish priesthood by colonial authorities, Greek and Roman, Zerubbabel's temple survived, until it was renovated on an impressive scale by Herod the Great. Herod began his grandiose rebuilding of the temple in 23 or 20 B. C. E. (Josephus, *BJ* 1:401; *Ant* XV. 389)<sup>2</sup>, and dedicated it ten years later. But work on the temple (finishing touches) continued for several years more (Jn. 2:20), right up to the time it was occupied by the Zealots in 64 C. E., only to be destroyed by the Romans six years later.

Three structures thus succeeded one another on the temple site. Solomon's temple stood there for nearly four hundred years from ca. 950 to 587 B. C. E. Zerubbabel's temple lasted five hundred years from 520 to 20 B. C. E. Herod's temple, the most

2 According to Josephus *BJ* 1.401, Herod began the building of the temple in the 15th year (23 B. C. E.) and according to *Ant* XV. 389 in the 18th year (20 B. C. E.) of his reign, the latter is more likely — cf. Gaalya Cornfeld (ed). *Josephus, The Jewish War* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982) 348.

magnificent of them all, was destroyed just ninety years after it was begun (20 B. C. E. to 70 C. E.). Because Herod's temple was undertaken as a restoration of Zerubbabel's, it is not regarded by Jewish tradition as a separate structure. Jewish tradition therefore speaks of two temples only: the First Temple built by Solomon, and the Second Temple built by Zerubbabel and embellished by Herod. In fact, Herod's temple was a wholly new construction and was dedicated as such. It is best to take it as a third temple and acknowledge the fact that the temple at Jerusalem assumed three *avatars*, not two.

### 1. The Shape of the Temple

All three temples were built according to the same basic pattern, which Solomon had borrowed from the traditional Canaanite temple architecture of his times<sup>3</sup>. The two temples, which followed his, and specially that of Herod, may have added considerably to the outer temple area (the *hieron* or *temenos* as Josephus calls it), but kept the structure and to a large extent the furnishings of the central sacred edifice (the *naos*) largely unchanged. In these the temple of Solomon served as a model for the others. It is therefore fortunate that we have an extensive description of this first temple (and only of this temple) in the Bible. The descriptions of Solomon's temple given in the three biblical sources that we have (1 Kgs 6-7; 2 Chron 2:1-5:14; and Ezek 40-43) are not always as clear and consistent as we might like it to be. For Kings is often obscure, Chronicles is prone to exaggeration, and Ezekiel describes an ideal temple, based on memories of the temple of Solomon which had just been destroyed. These descriptions moreover are not supported by archeological evidence. There are no archeological remains of Solomon's

3 On the structure of the Jerusalem temple(s), see specially W. F. Stinespring, "Temple, Jerusalem", in *IDB* IV, 534-60; Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (London: Darton Longman & Todd, 1961), 312-18. The closest parallels to the floor plan of Solomon's temples are those of the recently excavated Canaanite temples at Hazor and specially Tell Tainat (ancient Hattina) in north Syria between Aleppo and Antioch — Stinespring 540; de Vaux, 317; John H. Hayes and J. Maxwell Miller (eds.), *Israelite and Judaeon History* (London: SCM, 1977), 368. But Jean Ouellette, "Temple of Solomon", in *IDB Sup*, 872-74, sounds a cautious note about the similarity of Solomon's temple to these proposed models.

temple as there are of Herod's. But they do give us a reasonably good idea of what the first and most important Jewish temple was like, and of the kind of religiosity it embodied.

### 1.1 The temple of Solomon

According to 1 Kings 6-7, the most reliable of our sources, the temple of Solomon was a rectangular building about a hundred and twenty feet long, thirty five feet broad and fifty two feet high (1 Kgs 6:2)<sup>4</sup>, the size of a modest parish church today. Like a church, it was built according to the so-called 'long room' pattern, that is, with its entrance at a narrow end of the rectangle. The long building faced East, and was divided into three parts. An entrance hall or porch (the *'ālām*), led through carved wooden doors to the main hall (the *hākāl*), or the 'holy place (*qōdesh*); and this in turn led through another set of carved wooden doors to the inner sanctuary (*debīr*), the holy of holies (*qōdesh qōdāshim*) or the 'most holy place' of the temple. Built along the outer walls of the sanctuary and the main hall (but leaving the porch free) were three stories of small 'side rooms' which doubtless provided space for store rooms and offices (1 Kgs 6:5-6). The roof of the topmost storey of these 'side rooms' was lower than that of the main hall, so that clerestory windows could be put into the walls of the hall above the level of the side-rooms. Apart from these side rooms, the ground plan of Solomon's temple was, therefore, not unlike that of a Roman basilica with its porch, nave and sanctuary<sup>5</sup>.

The porch or *'ālām* of the temple was a small unadorned, room extending some 17 feet (10 cubits) into the building. Facing it on the outside, in the inner courtyard of the temple (1 Kgs 6:36), stood the altar for burnt offerings 35 feet square and 17 feet high

4 These measurements assume that the cubit in terms of which 1 Kgs 6:2 measures the dimensions of the temple ("the temple that King Solomon built was sixty cubits long, twenty cubits wide and thirty high") was the royal cubit measuring 20.9 inches, or a little more than 1.7 feet. The measurements refer to the inside of temple, and so ignore the thickness of the walls; and the length of the building does not include the porch. The overall length of the temple would therefore be 70 cubits or about 120 feet — cf. Stinespring (n. 3 above) 535; de Vaux (n. 3 above) 313-314.

5 On the description of the temple given below see M. Ottosson, "Hekhal" in *TDOT*. III, 384-85; Stinespring (n. 3 above) 535-38; de Vaux (n. 3 above) 319-31; Roubos (n. 1 above) 376-80.

(2 Chron 4:1), in front of which there was a bronze platform 8.5 feet square and 5 feet high for the officiating priest to stand on (2 Chron 6:13). At its side stood a huge richly ornamented bronze basin, the 'sea of cast metal' (*hayyām mûtsāq*), surely a marvel of metallurgical technology for the time, fully seventeen feet across and eight feet high, standing on twelve bulls in four groups of three, facing the cardinal points (1 Kgs 7:23), and holding 44,000 litres of water<sup>6</sup>. Water for ablutions was also provided by ten wheeled portable bronze basins carrying 9000 litres of water each (1 Kgs 6:27-40). Two free standing bronze pillars some thirty feet (18 cubits) high and about 6 feet across, carrying elaborate bronze capitals eight feet (5 cubits) high, stood on either side of the entrance to the porch. They were named Jakin and Boaz (1 Kgs 7:15-22). The meaning of these names and the significance of the pillars is now lost, but they may have signified the stability of Yhwh's relationship to the king, and so the permanence of both temple and dynasty as promised in Nathan's oracle (2 Sam 7:12-16), a key text for understanding the political role of the temple as will be seen below<sup>7</sup>.

The porch led through richly carved wooden doors into the *hékāl* or main hall of the temple, a long, high ceilinged room, some 70 feet long and 50 feet high, lighted with clerestory windows, floored with cypress wood and completely panelled with elaborately carved cedar (1 Kgs 16:15). The hall contained a golden table for the display of the 'showbread', ten golden lampstands (not unlike the large multi-spouted oil lamps seen in Hindu temples today), and a small altar for incense placed at the entrance of the sanctuary.

Behind the altar of incense doors of carved cypress wood led into the sanctuary or *dēbîr*, a small windowless room built as a perfect cube thirty-five feet (20 cubits) to the side, whose inner walls were overlaid, or more probably inlaid, with gold (1 Kgs 6:20). The *dēbîr*, dark and mysterious, like the *garbagrha* or a Hindu temple, housed the central cult object of pre-monarchic

6 The sea is said to have held two thousand 'baths' (1 Kgs 8:26). A 'bath' is a liquid measure believed to be equivalent to 22 litres or 5.8 gallons.

7 W. Kornfeld, "Der Synoikismus der Tempelsäulen", *ZAW* 74 (1962) 50-57 [sp. 57].

Israel, the ark. This has been variously interpreted as Yhwh's empty throne, or footstool (1 Sam 4:4); or as its Hebrew name, 'ārōn would seem to indicate, a box containing the tablets of the decalogue (Dt 10:1-5), or as de Vaux has suggested, both<sup>8</sup>. The ark stood between two large cherubim (winged bulls with human faces) made of olive wood covered with gold. These guardians of the sanctuary stood side by side facing the main hall with outstretched wings. The tips of their outer wings touched the walls of the *debir*; the inner wings met over the ark that was placed between them.

## 1.2 The temples of Zerubbabel and of Herod

Zerubbabel's Temple, which was built on the foundations of Solomon's probably resembled it closely in structure<sup>9</sup>, though it was much less lavishly built and furnished. It did not have the bronze 'sea', and the twin bronze pillars that had stood outside the porch of Solomon's temple. Curtains rather than doors separated the various chambers of the temple (compare 1 Macc 1:22; 4:51 with 1 Kings 6:31-35). A single golden lampstand, which, probably in the Hellenistic age, became the familiar seven branched candlestick depicted on the arch of Titus as part of the spoils from Herod's temple, replaced the ten lamps in the main hall of Solomon's temple (compare 1 Macc 1:21; 4:49 with 1 Kings 7:49)<sup>10</sup>. And the sanctuary no longer held the ark standing between the cherubim, but had a block of stone known as the 'foundation stone' (*'eben shetiyāh*) which was believed to rest on the threshing floor which, according to 1 Sam 16:18-25, David had bought from Araunah the Jebusite to build an altar on it; and which, according to 2 Chron 3:2, was the site on which Solomon built his temple<sup>11</sup>.

Herod greatly enlarged the temple area (*temenos*), adding courtyards, surrounded by an impressive system of gates and pillared porches in the Hellenistic style (Josephus, *BJ* V. 184-226). He may have put a Greek façade on the temple (though this is

8 de Vaux (n. 3 above) 299-301.

9 de Vaux (n. 3 above) 324: "It is quite certain that it (Zerubbabel's temple) followed the plan of the former Temple, and it is highly probable that it was exactly the same size".

10 Stinespring (n. 3 above) 550.

11 Helmer Ringgren, *Israelite Religion* (London: SPCK, 1966) 162.

doubtful) but otherwise he does not seem to have changed the basic structure or furnishings of the sacred building (*naos*) itself<sup>12</sup>.

## 2. The Religious Significance of the Temple

Like the Canaanite temple on which it was modelled the Jewish temple of Jerusalem was not a place of congregational worship (hence its limited size). It was, like all the temples in the ancient Near East, meant to be the dwelling place of the deity. Indeed so closely was the temple there identified with the 'house of God', that the older Semitic languages, de Vaux tells us, have no special word for a temple<sup>13</sup>. In Hebrew (as in Sumerian, Akkadian or Ugaritic) the temple is called simply the god's 'house' (*bēt*) or the god's 'palace' (*hēkal*), from the Sumerian E-KAL, which means 'a large house'). Temples in Mesopotamia and Palestine, "usually followed the same plan as a large house or palace; and the god, represented by his statue, was held to dwell there"<sup>14</sup>. While none of the ancient Semitic religions (indeed no religion anywhere) would imagine that the deity was really identical with its statue in the temple (the same deity could, after all, belong to several temples and dwell in each of them), the veneration of the statue of the deity as a symbol of its 'real presence' was often carried to extraordinary lengths. In Sumerian temples the statue was fed, clothed, taken for walks with an escort, treated in fact to a daily routine that was exactly the same as the King's<sup>15</sup>. The temple was the house of the god in a very concrete way.

### 2. 1 The House of the Lord: the Sedenterization of Yhwh

This was obviously not true of the temple in Jerusalem, built at a much later time and for a very different kind of deity. For one thing, Yhwh, unlike Mesopotamian and Canaanite deities, had (uniquely) no image. There was no statue of Yhwh in the Jerusalem temple that was to be fed, housed and clothed. Then too, Yhwh, the fierce mountain God of Midian, who had been brought to Palestine by the 'Mosaic host' to become

12 Stinespring (n. 3 above) 558-59.

13 de Vaux (n. 3 above) 282.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid., 283.

the god of the tribal federation of pre-monarchical Israel<sup>16</sup>, was a deity quite unlike a Canaanite Baal. Although the Canaanites worshiped a God of heaven (El), it was the local fertility gods, the Baals who were the principal figures in popular Canaanite religion. A Baal, as Eichrodt has pointed out, was, as it were, "the divine landlord of his particular area, within which he bestowed the blessings of nature on his worshippers". Hence, "the constant presence of the god was as much taken for granted as the unceasing existence of the forces of nature in which that presence was manifested; and from this it followed that the god was firmly settled in the sanctuary dedicated to him"<sup>17</sup>.

Yhwh, at least as he appears in the biblical text, was strikingly different. He was an isolated god. He was not the head of any pantheon, was assigned no consort, had no daughter or son. He was not, at least prior to his establishment in the Jerusalem temple, a local god, tied to a particular temple or territory. Like the clan gods of the 'Fathers' he was the god of a people, not of a place. He was moreover not a nature god dependent for his actions on the seasons of nature, but a god of history who could act when and where he would. He was a jealous god who claimed the exclusive loyalty of his people (though not of other peoples, who might have other gods). He was a god of ethical commands, not to be manipulated by rituals but demanding right conduct towards fellow human beings in the community as a condition of his favour<sup>18</sup>.

16 Georg Fohrer, *History of Israelite Religion* (London: SPCK, 1973) 68-75; The origins of Yahwism is wrapped in almost total obscurity. Fohrer offers a reasonably plausible reconstruction which, in its broad outlines, would probably command a large measure of agreement. Yahweh was originally a Midianite warrior God which the 'Moses host', the tribal group which under Moses had escaped from Egypt, brought to Canaan. It was accepted as their common God by the Israelite tribes already settled there (whether through conquest, or peaceful sedenterization or both). It was this acceptance of Yhwh and the Exodus and Sinai traditions associated with him that unified the loose federation of tribes in pre-monarchical Palestine into "Israel".

17 Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament Volumes I-II* (London: SCM, 1961) 1, 104-105.

18 Fohrer (n. 16 above) 77-79. But historians today would warn us that because the Israelites emerged at least in part from the indigenous population of Syro-Palestine, their religion at least in its beginnings would not have been so different from the Baalism of the native populations. "Archaeological evidence", Miller and Hayes tell us, "indicates an essentially

Such a god could not be accommodated into a Canaanite sanctuary without tension. The 'sedenterization' of Yhwh had already begun in the pre-monarchical period, when Yhwh was brought by the Moses tribes into Canaan to become the unifying god of Israelite tribes settled there, and accommodated in the Canaanite sanctuaries coopted by or built for him<sup>19</sup>. But the process reached a new level of institutional stability with the construction of the temple at Jerusalem and the installation of the ark in it (1 Kgs 8:6). This may have provoked vigorous protest among at least some sections of the people (2 Sam 7:5-7), but such protests did not prevent Solomon completing his task. For the Deuteronomist historian who reports the event, and who surely voices the conviction of most of Solomon's subjects and of all subsequent generations of Jews, Solomon's project met with Yhwh's unstinted approval. A 'cloud of glory' (the traditional sign of Yhwh's presence), filled the temple at the time of its dedication (1 Kgs 8:10-11), making good Solomon's boast: "I have indeed built a magnificent temple for you, a place for you to dwell forever" (1 Kgs 8:13).

But Yhwh was never completely at home in the shrines and the temple of Israel. His true dwelling place was in the heavens, set on the solid firmament above the waters of the heavens (Gen 24:7; Deut 26:15; Ps 2:4; 11:4) from where he looks down on his people (Deut 26:15), speaks to them (Ex 20:22), and

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continuous religious and cultic scene throughout Palestine during the early Iron Age. Nothing has been discovered, in other words, that suggests any notable distinctiveness in temple layout or cultic furniture for the time and territory of the early tribes" — J. Maxwell Miller and John H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah* (London: SCM, 1981) 111. Such continuity is confirmed by the parallels that exist between the religious and cultic terminology of the Bible and of extra-biblical Syro-Palestinian documents; by biblical passages like Dt 32:8-9 which suggest that Yahweh may have been viewed as the member of a pantheon ruled over by El; by a fragmentary text from Ugarit in which confirms this, for in it the god El says: 'the name of my son is Yaw'; and by the discovery of a ninth century Hebrew inscription at a site at Kuntillet Ajrud in southern Negeb which refers to "Yahweh and his Asherah". — *ibid.*, 109-112; Giovanni Garbini, *History and Ideology in Ancient Israel* (New York: Crossroad, 1988) 56-60. In view of this, current theories about the extra-Canaanite origins of Yahwism and the 'uniqueness' of Yahweh as an exclusively Israelite god will need to be considerably nuanced.

19 Fohrer (n. 16 above) 111; Ringgren, (n. 11 above) 156.

comes to their aid (Isa 64:1). Indeed even heaven itself is said to be too small to contain him (1 Kgs 8:27).

The tension between "the advantages of a real presence of the divinity at the sacred sites and the vivid realization that Yahweh's nature was totally incompatible with his sensible limitation to any one spot"<sup>20</sup> is resolved in the traditions of pre-monarchic Israel by making the sacred sites not so much places where Yahweh dwells, but places where he manifests himself. As Fohrer puts it:

God's dwelling place was never identified by Israel with Sinai; not even the expressions "he of Sinai" (Judg. 5:5; Ps. 68:9) and "mountain of God" can be taken in this sense. The reference is only to Yahweh's appearance or descent upon the mountain, not to his permanent dwelling there. The mountain serves as a temporary place of revelation or as the point of departure for Yahweh's further journey toward Palestine (Judg. 5:4-5; Deut. 33:2; Hab. 3:3-4; Ps. 68:18). Neither were the sanctuaries and cultic sites of Palestine considered places where Yahweh dwelt permanently. He was believed to be present only at the moment of his revelation there<sup>21</sup>.

This changes with the building of the temple, specially after the centralization of the cult by Hezekiah (727-628), and Josiah (639-623) tried to make the temple of Jerusalem the only legitimate sanctuary of Israel<sup>22</sup>, and after the disappearance of the monarchy at the Exile made it the only politico-religious institution of the people. The temple then became a highly localized centre of Jewish piety. It is called the 'house of god' (*bēt hî 'ēlohîm*), regularly in 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah (1 Chr 6:48; 2 Chr 3:3; Ezra 3:8; Neh 8:16); and occasionally in Daniel and in the post-exilic Psalms (Dan 1:2; 5:3; Ps 42:4; 52:8; 55:14). And Jerusalem (the

20 Eichrodt (n. 17 above) 1, 104.

21 Fohrer (n. 16 above) 167.

22 True centralization of the cult was achieved only after the exile. It is doubtful whether the attempts at centralization by Hezekiah or Josiah met with any marked success — Miller and Hayes (n. 18 above) 398-99. Reference to a 'temple of Yahweh' in a Hebrew ostrakon discovered at Arad in the Negev, which clearly refers to a temple in the locality from which the ostrakon had been sent, "shows that the centralization of cult had not been achieved by the end of the Kingdom of Judah" — Garbini (n. 18 above) 63.

temple city) or Zion (the temple mount) becomes the 'mountain of Yhwh' (Is 2:2-3; Mic 4:1-2) – where Yhwh is enthroned (Jer 14:21), whence he makes his voice heard (Amos 1:2), and to which after the Exile he will return to live there for ever, so that, as the book of Ezekiel triumphantly concludes (Ezek 48:35): "from that time on, the name of the city will be 'Yhwh is there' (*Yhwh shammāh*).

Yet even at this stage of the development of the temple's significance the theologians of Israel are careful to avoid the reduction of Yhwh into a local deity. They safeguard his transcendence by using representative symbols to signify his presence. The Deuteronomist speaks of the presence of Yhwh's 'name' (*shēm*); the priestly writer of the presence of his 'glory' (*kābōd*). For the Deuteronomist the temple is the place that Yhwh has chosen "as a dwelling for his name" (Dt 12:5; 14:23; 16:2,6,11), or has "built or consecrated for his name" (2 Sam 7:13; 1 Kgs 8:16, 18-19; 9:3, 7); and Jerusalem the city on which he has "put his name" (1 Kgs 11:36; 14:21). For the priestly writers Yahweh is present in the sanctuary and temple through his 'glory', a sort of glowing cloud which as "the reflected splendour of the transcendent God" is able to symbolize the gracious presence of Yahweh without tying him to an earthly site (Ex 24:15-17; 29:43; 40:34-35; Num 20:6)<sup>23</sup>.

## 2.2 The temple of God:

### Yhwh is God and there is no other

These theological *tours de force* of Israel's theologians succeeded admirably in safeguarding the transcendence of Yahweh in spite of his location in the temple. Indeed Jewish sensitivity to Yhwh's transcendence increases rather than decreases during the Second Temple period. In pre-monarchic and monarchic Israel Yahweh is worshipped as the sole God of his people, without excluding other gods who rule over other peoples (Jdg. 11:24), — over whom he is nonetheless acclaimed as supreme (Ex 15:11; Ps 82:1; 89:7; 95:3; 97:9)<sup>24</sup>. But with the Deuteronomist in the late monarchy (7th century B. C. E.), and specially with Deutero-Isaiah during the Exile such 'practical monotheism', begins to give way to an explicit 'theoretical monotheism', so that, in the post exilic

23 Fohrer (n. 16 above) 168; Eichrodt (n. 17 above) 11, 32.

24 But note that all these are formulae of hymnic acclamation which are not to be taken as measured theological affirmations.

period there is no longer any question that Yahweh is the only true God, the creator of heaven and earth, the Lord over all the kingdoms of the world (2 Kgs 19:15). This unambiguous but rather naive monotheism is expressed positively in the frequently recurring formula "Yahweh is God and there is no other" (Dt 4: 35; 1 Kgs 8:60; Isa 45:5,22; 46:9), which would be illuminated by a comparison with the traditional Hindu expression for the Absolute as the "one without a second". It is expressed negatively by the facile charge that "all the gods of the nations are idols" (Ps 96: 5; Isa 41:29; Jer 2:11), a charge which (like the accusations of 'idol worship' levelled on Hindus by Christian missionaries in British India) betrays an extraordinarily prejudiced ignorance of the religious beliefs of the people around. Did the second Isaiah really believe that the Babylonians, the Egyptians, the Phoenicians, cultivated peoples, technologically and culturally far ahead of the tiny, backward kingdom of Judah, put their trust in lifeless idols or dead images (Is 42:17; 44:9-20; 46:1-2)? How could he have been unaware of their intense, sustained, millennial experience of God? Could he not appreciate the obvious piety and goodness of the 'idolators' who seemed to have treated the exiles in their midst with unusual generosity and tolerance?<sup>25</sup> Religious prejudice can blind people in strange ways!<sup>26</sup>

Besides such explicit affirmations of Yhwh's exclusive uniqueness and universal dominion (so like the affirmation of the exclusive uniqueness and the universal salvific power of Jesus Christ by Christians today!), we find in the post-exilic literature of Judaism, and specially in its non-canonical works, a special emphasis on epithets that stress Yahweh's exalted transcendence; and a tendency to avoid using the divine name. Terms like 'the Almighty', 'the Lord or God of heaven', 'the Everlasting God',

25 Hayes and Miller (n. 3 above) 483-96. It is significant that relatively few exiles returned to Judah when allowed to do so by Cyrus. Most remained in Babylon forming there a community of Jews who were as influential for the future history of Judaism as those who resettled in Palestine.

26 Eichrodt (n. 17 above) 1. 227 points out that later (Hellenistic) Judaism "evidences a certain effort after fair-minded criticism by seeking to explain the origin of idol worship" (e. g. in Wisdom 13-14); and Ringgren (n. 11 above) 305-6, points to a universalistic tendency which appears alongside the nationalistic and particularistic thrust of later Judaism of which the most striking example is the book of Jonah. Such voices are to be heard in the Bible, but they are rare.

are common in late Old Testament and intertestamental literature. Yhwh's name is no longer pronounced, but is read as 'âdônây (my lord), so that the LXX will adopt *kyrios* as its standard translation for Yhwh. And circumlocutions like "the ancient of the days" (Dan 7:9), or "the great glory" (1 Henoch 14:18), or the shekinah ('the dwelling') are consistently used to avoid mentioning the name of God<sup>27</sup>. The transcendence of Yhwh the one God (Dt 6:5) is strongly maintained in Israel even after the installation of Yhwh in the temple.

### 2.3 A most holy place: Yhwh the Lord of cult

But other damaging consequences of the localization of Yhwh were not so easily avoided. Two of these can be seen developing in Jewish religion, specially after the exile. There is 1) a growing sacralization of the Temple site, which becomes the basis for an elaborate system of purities which (like Brahmanism) reinforces the exclusivism of Judaism and of a particular privileged caste within it; and there is 2) a growing sacralization of the temple cult, which, repulsive as it might appear to our post-Buddhist sensibilities because of its extravagant destruction of animal life<sup>28</sup> acquires a quasi-magical efficacy and replaces ethical conduct as the way of communion with God. Both these tendencies are the work of the Priestly school, which played a dominant role in shaping the traditions that determined the life of the post-exilic community. The result was that the 'debt system' of the Deuteronomist, rooted in the ancient Mosaic covenant traditions of Israel, which stressed "the moral and historical precariousness of Israel's status and future in a socially unjust situation "was amalgamated with (or, I would suggest, was overshadowed by) the 'pollution system' of the Priestly school which emphasized "the orderliness of the world as mediated by the stabilizing mechanisms of the cult"<sup>29</sup>.

27 Ringgren (n. 11 above) 307-309.

28 Josephus, *BJ* VI. 424, speaks of 255,600 lambs slaughtered on a single Passover somewhere between 63-66 C. E.). This is certainly an exaggeration, but it does give us some idea of the scale of the slaughter — cf. Cornfeld (n. 2 above) 450; Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem at the Time of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1969) 57.

29 Norman Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible: A Socio-Literary Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985) 482.

A system of purities centred round the temple and its cult (the 'holiness' of places and people was measured in terms of their proximity to the sanctuary of the temple, 'the most holy place')<sup>30</sup> began to supersede a system of ethical demands in which persons are judged 'righteous' because of their right relationship of justice towards each other. Care for the 'widow, the orphan and the refugee' as an indispensable condition for winning Yahweh's favour (see the covenant blessings and curses in Dt 28) is replaced by an obsessive concern for maintaining ritual purity by avoiding all contact with anything unclean, and so keeping at arms length not only the gentile and the Samaritan but also the 'untouchables' of one's own people.

The long term result of the building of the temple was thus the triumph of cult. The priestly theologians who safeguarded the transcendence of Yhwh and prevented him developing into a local Baal, found ways of domesticating him. As Yhwh grew increasingly distant from his people, they began to need the mediation of cultic specialists to encounter him. It was the temple and its cult and not the sovereign grace of Yahweh the gracious and the righteous god who irrupts freely into history to fashion a righteous people (Ex 6:2-7), that now guaranteed the security of the people. "Uncritical reliance on the protective sanctity of the Jerusalem temple to ward off difficulties for Judah seems to have been the main legacy of Josiah's reforms (Jer 7:4)", writes Gottwald<sup>31</sup>; and it is against this that the prophets protest announcing that temple and cult will avail nothing unless it is the expression of righteous life.

"Do not trust in these deceptive words: 'This is the temple of Yhwh, the temple of Yhwh,, the temple of Yhwh, says Jeremiah, "for only if you truly amend your ways and your doings, if you truly act justly one with another, if you do not oppress the alien, the orphan, and the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own harm, then I will dwell with you in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your ancestors forever and ever"' (Jer 7:4-7). Such a critique

30 On the system of purities in Judaism see Bruce Malina, *The New Testament World. Insights from cultural Anthropology* (London: SCM, 1981) 122-52.

31 Gottwald (n. 29 above) 396.

of the temple and its cult on the grounds of the primacy of ethical righteousness is a common theme of prophetic preaching (Hos 6:6; Mic 6:6-8; Is 58:1-12). It relativizes the temple and its cult but does not reject it. Indeed in a prophet like Isaiah imbued with the royal Zion ideology the temple and its city where Yhwh dwells (Is 8:18; 12:6) are under Yhwh's special protection (Is 31:43; 7:35) and are to be the centre to which all nations will come (Is 2:3; 45:14; 60:1-3) to pay tribute and receive instruction, for "instruction will go out from Zion, and the word of Yhwh from Jerusalem" (Is 2:3).

The conviction that the temple was the dwelling place of Yhwh played therefore a significant role in the religion of Israel. But the role it played was ambiguous. The temple may have enabled Yahwism to survive in the new critical situations it faced. But it did this by pushing Yahwism to change from the revolutionary religion of tribal Israel to the legitimizing religion of the monarchy. The change meant a blunting of the sharp prophetic edge of Yahwism. From an ethical religion passionately concerned about social righteousness it developed into a cultic religion, obsessed with regulations of ritual purity. This change was rather like the change which, a thousand years later, a daughter religion of Judaism would undergo when from being the religion of a persecuted minority it became, under Constantine, the state religion of the Roman empire. In both cases the change was reinforced by the ideological role that temple or church was to play in the political situation of the times.

### 3. The Political Role of the Temple

#### 3.1 The significance of the temple: historical not cosmic

Near Eastern temples abound in cosmic symbolism, but such symbolism is not conspicuous in the biblical references to the Jerusalem temple. Ps 48:2 compares Mount Zion, the city of the great king, to "the utmost heights of Zaphon", the mountain of the north, which in the Ras Shamra texts is the home of the gods. 2 Chron 6:12 mentions a platform which Solomon had built in front of the altar for the officiating priest to stand on, whose designation (*kiyyār*) might derive from the Sumerian KI-Ur, "the foundation of the earth". Ezekiel (43:14), in his symbolic

description of the ideal temple, speaks of the altar of sacrifice as resting on the "bosom of the earth" (*h'ēq hā' ārets*); and in his prophecy against Gog refers to the resettled people of Jerusalem as living on the 'navel of the earth' (*tabbūr h'ā ārets*). Both these have been interpreted as cosmic symbols, and have given rise to the later belief which has persisted from Philo to Dante, that the temple mount stood at the centre of the earth. The great bronze basin in the courtyard of the temple is said to be equivalent to the *apsu* of Mesopotamian temples, which, it is believed, stood for the fresh water ocean that lies under the earth<sup>32</sup>.

But evidence that such symbolism was intended by the Bible is meagre. Most of the symbolism detected by ancient commentators like Philo or modern scholars like Ringgren, has, one feels, been read into the text, and what little remains as possibly genuine (say in Ezekiel) is not really significant for understanding the meaning of the temple. De Vaux is surely correct in pointing out that the key to the symbolism of the temple is to be sought "not in myths, nor in cosmology, but in Israel's history, for the religion of Israel is not a religion of myths nor a nature religion, but an historical one"<sup>33</sup>. Next to its religious meaning and closely connected to it is the political role that temple played in Israel's history.

### 3.2 The role of the temple: the legitimization of monarchy

The political significance of the temple is shown by the fact that its beginnings coincide with that of the monarchy. The history of the temple begins with David, the first true king of united Israel. Saul had preceded David as king, but his "episodic military kingship", as von Rad neatly describes it<sup>34</sup>, was national rather than territorial. It was based on "national purity, rather than territorial unity"<sup>35</sup>. Saul, that is, king of the Israelites not of Israel. It is with David that the monarchy as an organized political

32 Ringgren (n. 11 above) 158-63; Ottosson (n. 5 above) 387-88.

33 de Vaux (n. 2 above) 329.

34 Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, Volumes I-II (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1962) 1, 36.

35 Hayes and Miller (n. 3 above) 329.

institution on the Canaanite model, begins. And it is David who sets afoot the construction of the temple.

David himself of course does not build the temple. But he brings the ark the sacred cult object of tribal Israel to Jerusalem and houses it in a tent he had made for it in 'his city' (1 Sam 6:12-17). He intends to build a temple, for the ark (2 Sam 7:2), but is frustrated, ostensibly by an oracle from God given through the Jebusite court prophet Nathan, but in fact by conservative Israelite opposition to his 'pagan' project which this oracle clearly expresses (2 Sam 7:4-7)<sup>36</sup>. But Solomon his son and successor who greatly extends his kingdom and strengthens its oppressive organization, is able to build a magnificent temple in which he solemnly installs the ark, the repository of the sacred traditions of tribal Israel (1 Kgs 8:1-9).

More significantly, the temple which housed the ark was built as part of the palace complex. It was built next to the palace (Ez 43:8), within a 'great courtyard' surrounded by a wall (1 Kgs 7:12). The single wall enclosing both the palace and temple marks the temple as the possession of the King. The temple is the king's temple. It has been built by the king, on royal property, with royal funds. It is managed by the king who freely draws funds from its treasury to finance its maintenance or his administration (1 Kgs 15:18; 2 Kgs 12:6-16; 16:10-18). Its cult is controlled by the king who appoints its priests. And the king, invested with sacral kingship on the Canaanite model plays a significant role in its cult<sup>37</sup>.

But the King's temple is also the temple of the state. It is "the king's sanctuary and the temple of the kingdom" (*miqdash melek ûbet mamlîkîh*) as the high priest of Bethel rightly describes the corresponding royal shrine of the northern Kingdom (Amos 7:13). Although to begin with the temple cult may have had little influence on the popular religiosity of the people (who clearly remained attached to the rural sanctuaries and 'high places' they had been accustomed to), it quickly grew in

36 Niek Poulssen, *König und Tempel im Glaubenszeugnis des Alten Testaments* (Stuttgart: KBW, 1967) 44-45.

37 George Soares-Prabhu, 'Christian Priesthood in India Today: A biblical Reflection', *Vidyajyoti* 56 (1992) 61-88 [sp. 65-66]; de Vaux (n. 3 above) 113-114.

importance to become (as the ark once was) the chief unifying symbol of their religion. With the 'cleansing of the temple' by Hezekiah in 8th century in an attempt to rid it of Canaanite accretions (2 Kgs 18:4), and the attempted centralization of cult by Josiah a century later (2 Kgs 23:5-25), the significance of the temple was obviously greatly enhanced. But already when the united monarchy broke up at the end of Solomon's reign, Jeroboam, the leader of the break away northern tribes had to build new shrines to Yahweh at Dan and Bethel to make sure that the attraction of worshipping in the temple of Jerusalem might not take his people away from him (1 Kgs 12:26).

The main political role of the temple was thus to legitimize the Davidic monarchy and so allow the introduction of a wholly new kind of social order in Israel. With the introduction of the monarchy Israel passed from a loosely organized charismatic clan alliance to a highly institutionalized state. However one conceives the origins of Israel in Canaan (whether as a conquest by semi-nomadic tribes from the desert [Albright], or as a peaceful settlement of pastoral nomads in the unoccupied highlands of the country [Alt], or as revolt by marginalized Canaanite peasants against their overlords in the Canaanite city states catalysed by the liberating cult of Yahweh brought in by the Mosaic group [Mendenhall and Gottwald]<sup>38</sup>, and however one evaluates the rise of the monarchy (whether positively as a "new but also inevitable step" in the progression towards the unity of Israel [Miller and Hayes]<sup>39</sup>, or negatively as 'Israel's counter-revolutionary establishment' which reverses the retribalizing thrust of "Israel's revolutionary beginnings" [Gottwald]<sup>40</sup>), this meant a drastic change in Israel's social situation and ideology. A people whose foundational myth spoke of a god who had "brought them out from under the burden of the Egyptians", that is, had freed them from bonded labour in Egypt (Ex 6:7), are now invited to accept a state in which the king "conscripted

38 For a discussion of recent hypotheses of the occupation of Canaan see Marvin Charney, "Ancient Palestinian Peasant Movements and the Formation of Premonarchic Israel", in David Freedman and David Graf (eds.), *Palestine in Transition: The Emergence of Ancient Israel* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1983) 39-89.

39 Hayes and Miller (n. 3 above) 331.

40 Gottwald (n. 29 above) 131; 289.

forced labour out of all Israel; the levy numbered thirty thousand men" (1 Kgs 5:13).! The autonomy of a loose tribal union is replaced by the oppressive administration of a highly centralized state (1 Kgs) the cost of whose wars and building programmes the people have to bear.

That the tribes of Yahweh reacted to this with some unrest (more unrest probably than appears in our ideologically edited pro-monarchical text) is evident from the few but telling anti-monarchical traditions that have survived in it, lending poignancy and drama to Israel's official history (cf. 1 Sam 8:6-18; 10:17-19). That Israel nonetheless accepted the new order was due not only to socio-economic and political factors like the Philistine military threat, or the expansion of agriculture, trade and population in the Palestinian highlands in the early iron age calling for institutional intensification in the organization of the tribes<sup>41</sup>, but also to the religious legitimation which the monarchy received through the construction of the temple. The association of the king with the temple, the shrine of the ark and the dwelling place of Yahweh, gave special importance both to the person of the king and to his city. On the one hand "Zion was understood as the chosen dwelling of God, the elect place, the cosmic mountain, and as inviolably protected by Yahweh (see Pss. 46,48,76 and the Zion theology of the prophet Isaiah in the eighth century)"<sup>42</sup>; on the other hand "the king was seen to stand in a special relationship with God of Israel", a relationship "that was expressed by the concept of adoption or legitimation by the godhead, a concept which appears to have been inherited from the ideology of the Canaanite city state (Ps 2:7; 2 Sam 7:14; Is 9:6)"<sup>43</sup>.

Both the royal and the Zion traditions come together in the theology of the Davidic covenant, which originated in court circles as a brilliant device of religious legitimation. The 'covenant' (cf. 2 Sam 23:5; Ps 89:3), which is patterned on the Near Eastern

41 Robert Coote and Keith Whitelam, "The Emergence of Israel: Social Transformation and State Formation following the Decline in Late Bronze Age Trade", *Semeia* 37 (1986) 107-47. The whole issue of *Semeia* to which the article belongs deals with a sophistication unusual in biblical studies, with the sociological factors involved in the emergence of the Israelite monarchy.

42 Hayes & Miller (n. 3 above) 373.

43 Ibid. 371.

genre of the "royal grant", bestowed on servants of a king who have distinguished themselves in the service of their master<sup>44</sup>, takes the form of unconditional promise which guarantees both a stable dynasty for David and the choice of Zion as God's dwelling place (2 Sam 7:8-16; Ps 132:11-13). This Davidic or Zion covenant, which echoes the promise made to the Fathers in earlier traditions of Israel, became the dominant ideology of the southern kingdom. It replaced there the Mosaic or Sinai covenant, a conditional agreement, patterned on the Hittite suzerain treaties, which had expressed the Yahwist faith of pre-monarchical Israel, and persisted as the basic ideology of the northern kingdom until its fall. With the fall of Samaria (722 B.C.E) refugees from the north brought their traditions to Jerusalem, and the Deuteronomist reform of Josiah attempted to reinstate the ancient Mosaic covenant in the southern kingdom, without, however, giving up the royal ideology embodied in the covenant to David. Indeed so powerful was the influence of this ideology that it persisted even after the monarchy had disappeared! After the exile the promise to David was projected into the eschatological future, and gave rise to a fervent Davidic Messianism, and a passionate conviction in the indestructibility of the Temple<sup>45</sup>, which was one of the factors that inspired the ill fated revolt against Rome.

### 3.3 The function of the restored temple: the centre for a holy community

The second temple built after the exile no longer serves as a rallying point for the monarchy. Zerubbabel's temple was not built as part of the palace complex but stood alone. Its physical isolation symbolized its autonomy. The temple was no longer under the control of the king. As the sole shrine of Judaism, the one unifying centre of the people, the temple acquired enormous significance. It was 'holy', indeed the most holy place in the world, so that the holiness of a place would be determined by its

44 Moshe Weinfeld, "Covenant, Davidic", in *IDB Sup.* 188-92 [sp. 189].

45 Helmut Schwier, *Tempel und Tempelzerstörung. Untersuchungen zu den theologischen und ideologischen Faktoren im ersten juedisch-römisch Krieg* (Goettingen; Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989) 74-90. Schwier traces this conviction to three theological themes, the Zion tradition, the tradition of the Holy War, and the expectation of the eschatological battle, in all three of which the temple has a central role (p. 90).

proximity to or distance from the centre of the temple, If the sanctuary was the 'most holy place' ('the holy of holies'), the 'nave' of the temple was the 'holy place', Jerusalem the 'holy city' and Israel the 'holy land'<sup>46</sup>. Such holiness demands ritual purity on the part of all those who approach the temple, so that concern for ritual purity becomes the dominant ethos of the post exilic Judaism, fostered by the conservative, exclusivist priestly class that returns from Babylon under Ezra and Nehemiah to rebuild the temple, and give a new and disastrous direction to the Jewish religion. Once again the new temple ideology outlasts the temple which occasions it. The formative Judaism which emerges after the destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. is still obsessed with the law of purities — even though there is no temple to act as the focus of these laws.

## Conclusion

No temple probably exercised as great an influence on the lives of its people as the temple of Jerusalem. For the first four hundred years of its thousand year history it was the best known shrine of its people; for the remaining six hundred years it was their only place of worship. Its cult and its ideology inevitably left a profound imprint on the religion and history of Israel. The temple was built by Solomon for political rather than religious reasons. It was part of the process of political consolidation initiated by David when he brought the ark to Jerusalem, 'his city', newly conquered by him, and standing outside the traditional tribal territories, with their own holy places and shrines. By building the temple in David's city and as part of his palace complex; by making it the shrine of the ark (the traditional cult object of the tribes of Israel); and by projecting it as the dwelling place of Yahweh, Solomon provided his new kingdom with the ultimate religious legitimation. He made himself a key figure in the religion of Israel as the guardian of the ark and the one who controlled the blessings of Yahweh. So powerful was this legitimation that it resulted in a new religious ideology, the theology of the Zion covenant, which in the southern Kingdom at least

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46 Mishna, *Kelim* 1:6-9 which proceeds in ten ascending stages from the land of Israel which is "holier than any other land" to the Holy of Holies, the holiest of all places.

largely replaced the traditional theology of the Sinai covenant which had provided tribal Israel with its identity. This new theology guaranteed the perpetual stability of both David's dynasty and David's city and gave the King a unique status. "The Judahite kings", writes Gottwald, "were judged to be 1) in a distinctive filial relation to Yahweh; 2) intermediaries between Yahweh and the people; 3) exemplars of piety and obedience to Yahweh; and 4) executors of Yahweh's justice domestically and among the nations"<sup>47</sup>.

At the same time the building of the temple was part of a state sponsored syncretism through which Solomon (following the policy of David) tried to make Yahwism acceptable to his Canaanite subjects. "The temple was dedicated to Yahweh, the God of Israel", say Hayes and Miller, "but it was a Canaanite temple, where all the inhabitants of the region could have felt at home. Behind its official functions, the reality could hardly be concealed that the temple served the national cult rather than it did the former Lord of Israel"<sup>48</sup>.

These attempts at political consolidation and religious unity succeeded in part, but led eventually to quite unexpected results. The status of the Davidic dynasty was enhanced to such an extent that it remained the sole ruling family of the southern kingdom, until its fall in 587 B. C. E. Indeed, its influence persisted, in the utopian form of Davidic Messianism, long after the monarchy had ceased to exist. But the legitimation provided by the temple was not able to prevent the break up of Solomon's empire, and the return of the northern tribes to a style of kingship more in keeping with the tribal traditions of pre-monarchical Israel.

The attempt at syncretism with Canaanite religion on the other hand led to a strong conservative reaction. The reaction which began in the conservative prophetic circles of the northern kingdom was probably responsible for the Elohistic and Deuteronomist traditions that we now have in the Bible. It was carried to the south after the fall of Samaria where it inspired the reforms of Hezekiah and Josiah which attempted to purify

47 Gottwald (n. 29 above) 336.

48 Hayes and Miller (n. 3 above) 370.

the Jerusalem cult from elements deriving from the fertility rituals of Canaan, and to centralize the cult in the one temple of Jerusalem. In this the reformers were not strikingly successful. But what they had attempted was realized more drastically than they might have wished through the catastrophe of the Babylonian exile. The catastrophe forced the uprooted theologians in exile to find ways of preserving their Jewish identity. They did this by collecting their sacred traditions and reinterpreting them to find a "new way of living, a way of living adapted to an existence within a universal empire, without political independence but preserving itself as a self-governing religious community, separated from other peoples and religions by means of a rigid exclusiveness"<sup>49</sup>. This exclusiveness brought back by the exiles to Judah, became the determining factor of post exilic Judaism. Where Solomon's temple, built at a time of national self confidence and political expansion, had been a centre of openness to Canaanite religion, the new temple of Zerubbabel, built at a time of national crisis, insecurity and political unfreedom, became the hub of a growing exclusivism, which, through a system of purity rules began to exclude from communion not only all the other peoples of the world but even great masses of 'Israel', judged for one reason or other to be unclean<sup>50</sup>. As the great integrative institution of its religion the temple offered the Jews a symbol of identity which helped them to survive the catastrophe of the Exile, as other peoples (like the Edomites or the Moabites) had been unable to do. But precisely because of its integrative role it was powerless to prevent the inflation of cult and the hardening of purity rules which always indicate a decline in religion. It is against this decline Jesus protested when he reminded his hearers of Israel's prophetic tradition that mercy is preferable to sacrifice (Mt. 9:13); and when, putting this into practice, he freely violated purity regulations by eating with tax collectors and sinners (Lk 5:1-2).

De Nobili College  
Pune — 411 014

George Soares-Prabhu

49 Ibid., 538.

50 George Soares-Prabhu, "The Table Fellowship of Jesus: its Significance for Dalit Christians in India Today", *Jeevadhara* 22/128 (1992) 140-59.

# The Man-made Temple and the God-made Sanctuary

## Some Aspects of the New Testament Theology of the Temple

The article tries to spell out certain specific features of the theme of the temple in the New Testament. The Marcan narrative of the ministry of Jesus in Jerusalem, while continuing the theme of Jesus' self-revelation, is characterized by an anti-temple theme as well. This is particularly evident in the episode of Jesus' cleansing the temple (Mk 11:15-18), and its aftermath. As the narrative progresses Jesus predicts the destruction of the man-made temple, while at the same time the emergence of a God-made sanctuary is foreseen. In the same way, the Letter to the Hebrews and the Fourth Gospel affirm that acceptable sacrifice is offered, and God is authentically worshipped, not in a man-made temple but in the God-made sanctuary. Paul too points out that Christians, because of their unique relation to Christ, constitute God's own sanctuary.

### Introduction

A comprehensive and indepth study of the theme of the Temple in the New Testament is beyond the purview of this article. What I am trying to do in the present study is to spell out certain characteristic features of the theme that, according to my knowledge, are typical of the New Testament and relevant to the present Indian situation as well. This is done mainly in three stages: I. Jesus and the Man-made Temple; II. Jesus Christ, the God-made Sanctuary; and III. Christians as God's Sanctuary.

### 1. Jesus and the Man-made Temple

Peter's confession of Jesus' Messiahship (8:27-30) which is considered the watershed of Mark's Gospel is the *terminus ad*

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1 The Greek noun *hieron* means temple, including the whole temple precinct but *naos* primarily means the temple proper. In the NT, however, *hieron* primarily designates the Temple of Jerusalem but with regard to Christians' worship *naos* is consistently used except in Revelation.

*quem* of all that precede and the *terminus a quo* of all that follow. Immediately after that Jesus in unequivocal terms states that he is the suffering Son of Man (8:31)<sup>2</sup>. Jesus' Passion and Death are primarily not the results of the Jewish authority's efforts (of course, with the co-operation of the Roman superpower) to destroy Jesus nor is it a mere outcome of Jesus' miscalculated ministry which led him to confrontation with the Jewish leaders. On the contrary, his Passion and Death basically originates from God's own designs — therefore a divine necessity<sup>3</sup> — for the salvation of humans (cf. 10:45; 14:24). This divine plan is, however, executed with the full co-operation of humans (cf. 8:31; 9:31; 10:32-34) and it is destined to take place at Jerusalem (10:32), the Holy City<sup>4</sup>. Yet the centre of Jesus' ministry in chs. 11-13 is not the city of Jerusalem as such but the Temple in Jerusalem.

### A. Jesus' cleansing the Temple

According to Mark, although Jesus does proceed to Jerusalem (cf. 11:1,11), the focal point of his ministry is at the Temple in Jerusalem. This ministry narrated in chs. 11-13 may be schematically presented according to the following scheme based on spatio-temporal categories<sup>5</sup>:

	1st day	2nd day	3rd day
A Journey towards Jerusalem and entry into the city and Temple	11:1-11a	11:12-15a	11:20-27a
B Activity in the Temple	11:11b	11:15b-18	11:27b-12:44
A' Exit from the Temple and departure from Jerusalem (to Bethany)	11:11c	11:19	13:1,2-37

A closer look at this scheme reveals that there is a steady progression in Jesus' ministry in the Temple: on the first day, Jesus has a searching look (*peribleps amenos*) at everything but

2 See also 9:9, 12, 31; 10:32-34, 45; 14:21, 41.

3 See *dei* in 8:31; scriptural necessity in 9:12-13; 14:21, 27, 49; divine passive in 9:31; 10:33; and the contrast between divine will and human will in 8:33; 14:36.

4 Cf. Emil Schurer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, vol. II, Edinburgh: Clark, 1979, 529-30.

5 Cf. Scaria Kuthirakkattel, *The Beginning of Jesus' Ministry According to*

no word or deed: on the second day, his authoritative deed (cleansing the Temple) is followed by his teaching; and, on the third day, he is engaged exclusively in dialogue, often controversial, in which the nature of his person and mission is clearly revealed.

Of the three day's activities, the events narrated of the second day (11:15-18) are important. Of the events on the second day, the cleansing of the Temple is of supreme importance. This event is important not because it was a politically motivated revolutionary act which led to Jesus' crucifixion<sup>6</sup>; in fact, Jesus never advocated violence and he seems to have refused to make a political option (Mk 12:13-17 and par). Nor because it was a pious religious act — protecting the religious rights of the Gentiles, devaluing sacrifice but affirming the significance of prayer etc.<sup>7</sup> — since Mark does narrate Jesus' prediction of the destruction of the Temple (13:2) and the tearing of its curtain (15:38). The historical reconstruction of the event, particularly by comparing with the parallel in John (2:13-16), is probably not that significant either<sup>8</sup>. The theological significance of Jesus' cleansing the Temple will become clear by studying the text (11:15b-18) in its literary and theological context for which the following structure will be of immense help.

A Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem: a Revelatory Messianic Event (11:1-11).

B Cursing the Fig Tree (11:12-14)

C Cleansing the Temple and Teaching (11:15-18)

B' The Fig Tree Withered (11:19-26)

A' Jesus' Authority Questioned: Jesus' Messianic Authority (11:27-33)

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*Mark's Gospel (1:14-3, 6): A Redaction Critical Study* (AnBib 123), Rome: Biblical Institute, 1990, 53-56.

6 Cf. Joachim Gnilka, *Das Evangelium nach Markus* (Mk 8:27-16, 20), vol. II, Köln: Benziger, 1979, 126-32.

7 Cf. William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1974, 402-408; D. E. Nineham, *Saint Mark*, London: Cox, 1976, 300-305.

8 Cf. Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, vol. I, New York,

The triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem (11:1-11) highlights his Messiahship. This is evident from various angles. Zech 9:9 narrates the Messiah's coming "humble and riding on an ass, on a colt the foal of an ass". Zech 14:4 associated the Mount of Olives with the coming of the Messiah. Furthermore, *ho erchomenos* (11:9) is probably a Messianic title. Finally, Mk 11:10, a comment on Ps 118:25-26, is based on the Messianic title, Son of David. Parallel to 11:1-11 (A) is 11:27-33 (A') where the chief priests, scribes and the elders of the people — all members of the Sanhedrin — question the source of Jesus' authority. Jesus' counterquestion in 11:30 and their assessment of the implications of his question in 11:31-32 show a relation between John the Baptist and Jesus. From the narrative point of view the nature of this relation is obvious: John the Baptist in his person and ministry (1:2-8, especially verses 7-8) is identified with Elijah, the precursor of the Messiah; John's beheading (1:14a; 6:14-29) anticipates Jesus' own Passion and Death; and John is explicitly identified as Elijah (9:11-13). Therefore, the authority of John is that of Elijah, the expected precursor of the Messiah, and Jesus' authority, by implication, is obviously Messianic.

The cursing of the fig tree in 11:12-14 (B) and its withering away in 11:19-26 (B') are also significant. There are a number of texts in the prophetic literature<sup>9</sup> where the fig tree symbolizes Israel. Therefore, by inserting the cursing of the fig tree and its withering away in Jesus' cleansing of the Temple and his teaching, the evangelist highlights the unproductivity of Israel as the bearer of salvation and the consequent rejection of Israel by God.

The central pericope (C) in verses 15-18 mainly contains the narration of Jesus' cleansing of the Temple followed by his teaching. What does the evangelist mean by Jesus' cleansing the Temple and his teaching? Of course at the surface level the meaning is clear. At a deeper level, however, the meaning is not clear at all. These verses narrate Jesus' deed, cleansing the Temple (verses 15-16), and his word, teaching the people (verse 17). There are passages elsewhere in Mark, for instance, 1:21-28; 2:1-12 etc., where Jesus' word and deed occur conjointly. In Mk 1:21-28

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Doubleday 1966, 116-120.

9 Cf. Jer 8:13; Hos 9:10, 16-17; Joel 1:7; Mic 7:1-6, etc.

and 2:1-12 are both channels of revelation, viz., Jesus' Messiahship<sup>10</sup>. Similarly, in the light of Mk 11:1-11 and 27-33, in 11:15-17 too Jesus' Messianic authority is manifested. In fact, Jesus' teaching in Mark as a whole is Messianic<sup>11</sup>; and in 11:17 which is a combination of Is 56:7 and Jer 7:11 Jesus' teaching has also an emphasis on and an orientation to the Gentile mission.

The precise nature of the Messianic accent in 11:15-17 becomes clearer if one understands the meaning and function of Jesus' cursing the fig tree (11:12-14) and its withering away (11:19-26). In other words, what is implied and highlighted in verses 15-17 is the eschatological visitation of the Temple from the Messiah and the abrogation of its cultic role<sup>12</sup>. The Temple at Jerusalem because of its failure to bear fruit as desired by God will be replaced with an eschatological sanctuary where all nations will authentically relate themselves to God and to one another. The definitive plan of the chief priests and scribes to kill Jesus as narrated in the verse that immediately follows (11:18) corroborates our interpretation of verses 15-17. For had Jesus' act been unwarranted, people themselves would have objected to and even prevented Jesus from doing it. Again, supposing that people were misled by Jesus, the Jewish authorities (some of whom resided in the vicinity) could have sought the help of the Temple guards. None of such or similar preventive measures were taken. The precise reason why such measures were not taken is that the chief priests and scribes did not accept Jesus' Messiahship and his Messianic mission. So their attempt to kill Jesus is primarily theological.

## B. Jesus predicts the destruction of the Temple

As the narrative proceeds the Jewish authority's opposition to Jesus steadily mounts, the opponents become more and more specific, and the intensity of their plot becomes more and more focused — all leading to Jesus' condemnation to death. This can be expressed according to the following scheme:

10 Cf. Kuthirakkattel (cf. n 5 above), 116-141, 174-197.

11 *Ibid.*, 127.

12 Cf. John R. Donahue, *Are You the Christ? The Trial Narrative in the Gospel of Mark* (SBL DS 10), Missol'a, 1973, 114; Gnlika, (cf. n. 6 above), 129-131.

The chief priests and the scribes sought a way to destroy Jesus (11:18)

The chief priests and the scribes tried to arrest him (12:12)

The chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest him by stealth and kill him (14:2)

The chief priests, the scribes and the elders arrested him by stealth (14:43-50)

The chief priests, the scribes and the elders (presided over by the high priest) condemned him as deserving death (14:55-65).

A closer look at chs. 11-12 points to another dimension of the narration. Although the Jewish authorities were keen to destroy Jesus, people's appreciation for and acceptance of him (especially fascinated by his teaching) prevented them from executing their plot (cf. 11:18; 12:12). Jesus' ministry in which the nature of his person and mission is clearly perceptible continues unhindered even though intricate questions in view of trapping him were being asked (cf. 12:13-34). Towards the end of Jesus' ministry at the Temple the Jewish authorities and their accomplices were at their wit's end that "from then on no one dared ask him any more questions" (12:34b). One should note that the question of Christ's origin (12:35-37), the warning about the scribes (12:38-40), and the comment on the widow's offering (12:41-44) are all on Jesus' own initiative. Yet as the narration progresses one notices a total reversal of the Sanhedrin's plan: they wanted to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him (14:2). Why such a drastic change in the strategy of the supreme authority of the Jews?

The plot of the Sanhedrin to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him forms part of the introduction to the passion narrative. The reason for and the circumstances of the plot differ from Gospel to Gospel. According to the fourth Gospel, Jesus' bringing Lazarus back to life (Jn 11:1-44) — the last of a series of signs that Jesus worked as from the beginning of chapter two — motivated the chief priests and the Pharisees to hold a meeting of the Sanhedrin to arrest and kill Jesus

(11:45-57). According to the third Gospel, Satan had, after the last temptation, left Jesus until an opportune time, *kairos* (Lk 4:13). Satan seems to have found the opportune moment when the chief priests and the scribes were desperately seeking a way to destroy Jesus (22:2). Realizing that the opportune moment has come, Satan enters into Judas (22:3) who takes the initiative to betray Jesus to the Sanhedrin (22:4-6). In the first Gospel Jesus strongly accuses the scribes and Pharisees in ch. 23 — a series of seven indictments. This might have been one of the reasons why the Sanhedrin wanted to kill Jesus. In the second Gospel, however, none of the motivations mentioned above are found. If so why did the Sanhedrin reverse the strategy and have had recourse to totally unjust means to arrest Jesus and kill him (Mk 14:2)?

It seems to me that the answer to this question is found in Jesus' prediction of the destruction of the Temple (Mk 13:2-3). The context of this text is significant. After his ministry in the Temple (chs. 11-12) Jesus quits it definitively, never to enter there again (13:1). Then the disciples marvel at the beauty of the Temple. This occasioned Jesus to predict its destruction in 13:2-3 which forms the introduction to the eschatological discourse (13:5-37). (Mk 13:5-37 is, to some extent, a farewell discourse as well).

The text (13:2) does not state who would destroy the Temple. The aorist subjunctive passive, *kataluthē(i)* does not have an agent. Does the author have Romans in mind? Or is it theological passive, meaning God? Or is it a combination of both? We are not sure. Immediately after the prediction of the destruction of the Temple in 13:2 Jesus sat on the Mount of Olives (absent in Lk). Sitting probably indicates authority (cf. 4:1; 12:36; 14:62); the place where he sat is the Mount of Olives which according to Zech 14:4 was associated with the manifestation of the Messiah; and he sat opposite to the Temple — *katenanti tou hierou* (absent in Mt). Jesus' mode of sitting, opposite to the Temple, denotes not merely a spatial distance but a theological distance as well<sup>13</sup> — in fact, a theological

13 Peter who followed Jesus' (1:11), *closely* shared in Jesus' own life and

contrast. There is a contrast between the Temple (inclusive of all that it stood for) and Jesus in and through whom the Messianic era has been ushered in. It indicates the difference and even the sharp contrast between the theology/christology of Marcan Jesus and the theology of the Jewish authorities<sup>14</sup> which the Temple epitomized.

In brief, from the narrative point of view Jesus' renewed attack on the Temple with all that it stood for motivated the Sanhedrin to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him. The reference to the destruction of the Temple in the scene of Jesus' trial before the Sanhedrin (14:58) and his mockery (15:29) confirms our interpretation.

### C. The splitting of the Temple veil

The last occurrence of the noun, Temple, in the second Gospel is found in reference to the rending of the Temple curtain into two from top to bottom. There are mainly two opinions with regard to its historicity as well as interpretation. A considerable number of authors think that *katapetasma* refers to the veil before the Holy of Holies (where the high priest was allowed to enter once in a year to offer expiatory sacrifice) whereby it was separated from the Holy Place or Sanctuary<sup>15</sup>. The rending of the curtain, according to these authors, signifies that by virtue of Jesus' Death access to God is open to all (not only to the Jews). The curtain refers to the veil in front of the whole sanctuary, maintain some others, and its splitting into two connotes the destruction of the Temple by virtue of Jesus' Death<sup>16</sup>. Both groups consider that the splitting of the curtain is closely connected with Jesus' Death and it is irreversible.

mission (3:14), and confessed Jesus' messianic identity (8:29) followed him at *distance* (14:54) before the condemnation to death (14:64) and his denial of Jesus (14:66-72).

14 Cf. Donahue, (cf. n 12 above), 112-128; Frank J. Matera, *The Kingship of Jesus* (SBL DS 66), Chico: Scholars, 1982, 67-91.

15 Cf. Rudolf Pesch; *Das Markus-Evangelium*, vol 2, Freiburg: Herder, 1980, 498-99; Vincent Taylor *The Gospel According to St Mark*, London: Macmillan, 1966, 496-97 and the authors cited by him.

16 Cf. Donahue, (cf. n. 12 above), 201-203; Ernst Lohmeyer, *Das Evangelium*

One should, however, note that the curtain of the Temple (*katapetasma tou naou*) does not refer to the curtain before the Holy of Holies but to the veil before the whole sanctuary. Donahue has pointed out that in the LXX *naos* is not employed in reference to the Holy of Holies<sup>17</sup>. More significantly, although Holy of Holies occurs in the Epistle to the Hebrews (cf. 6:19; 9:3; 10:19) *naos* is not used in reference to it. Therefore, from the literary point of view the second opinion is preferable. Furthermore, Jesus' anti-Temple stance began in 11:15-17, continued in 13:2, adduced as evidence against him in 14:58, used as a taunt in 15:29-30, comes to a climax in 15:38 immediately after Jesus' Death (15:37). Thus, thematically too, the second view is more cogent.

Gnilka opines, without offering much details, that these two views are not contradictory but complementary<sup>18</sup>. Although a study of 15:38 in itself may furnish evidence for both the views, an examination of the context of the text would show that the two views are complementary. Because this point is clear from what follows, it suffices here to state that man has access to God in and through the Suffering Messiah (cf. 15:37-39). The Temple and all that it stood for have become totally obsolete. This implies that the rending of the Temple veil should be understood in a symbolic sense.

## II. Jesus Christ, the God-made Sanctuary

### A. Jesus' death: pivotal point

It was mentioned at the beginning of this article that from Peter's confession (8:27-30) onwards the shadow of the cross becomes more and more visible. As the narrative progresses Jesus' Suffering, Death and Resurrection are presented as inevitable consequences of his mission. One can detect three stages in this progression as the following scheme shows:

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*des Markus*, Gottingen: Ruprecht, 1967, 346-47; Eduard Schweizer, *Das Evangelium nach Markus*, Gottingen: Ruprecht, 1983, 195.

17 Cf. Donahue, (see n. 12 above), 202.

18 Cf. Gnilka, (see n. 6 above), 324.

In chs. 8-10 the three predictions (8:31; 9:31; 13:32-34) and the divine necessity (8:31,33; 9:12-13; 10:45)

In chs. 11-12 the plot of the Jewish authorities to destroy Jesus

JESUS' PASSION, DEATH  
AND RESURRECTION

In 14:1-42 the role of the disciples (14:18-21, 27,30-31) and the divine necessity (14:21,27,36)

In the Marcan narration of Jesus' Passion, Death and Resurrection (14:1-16:8) the focal point occurs in 14:53-65, especially in 14:64, where the Sanhedrin condemn Jesus to death — a definitive juridical decision<sup>19</sup>. In the fourth and third Gospels it is in the process before Pilate that Jesus is condemned to death by crucifixion (Jn 18:28-19:16a; Lk 23:1-5, 13-25). In Matthew, where Mark is followed closely, the morning counsel (27:1) seems to be the definitive conclusion to the scene of Jesus' trial before the Sanhedrin<sup>20</sup>.

Can a juridical decision be the peak event of the Passion in a Gospel which recounts God's saving act worked in and through Jesus, the Christ? This is specially relevant to Mark since it ends on an unusual note: "the women said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid" (16:8)<sup>21</sup>. In the other three Gospels the definitive decision to put Jesus to death whether by the Sanhedrin or Pilate is not so prominent because of the smooth transition from the Passion to Resurrection and the aftermath: apparitions and the missionary command in Matthew (28:9-20); the Emmaus encounter, apparition to the apostles, the last instruction to them, followed by ascension in Luke (24:13-53); apparitions and the aim of the Gospel in John (20:11-31). Has Mark narrated any key event, in a dramatic and mysterious way, after the Sanhedrin's decision to put Jesus to death?

The scene of Jesus' crucifixion, death and burial in Mark (15:20d-47) is instructive from two angles: the sequence of events and the manner in which these events are narrated. For the sake of clarity let us see the structure of 15:20d-47.

19 Cf. Kuthirakkattel, (see n. 5 above), 60.

20 Cf. Matera, (see n. 14 above), 9.

21 Mk 16:9-20 does not belong to the original Mark according to most scholars.

- A the way to Golgotha, offering of drink, and the division of the garments (15:20d-24)
- B crucifixion of Jesus, inscription on the cross, and the crucifixion of two robbers (15:25-27)
  - C mockery by three groups: those who passed by, the chief priests with the scribes, and the two robbers who were crucified with him (15:29-32)
  - D the cosmic event (darkness over the earth), Jesus' loud cry, and the offering of vinegar (15:33-36)
  - E Jesus' death (15:37)
  - D' splitting of the Temple curtain (15:38)
  - C' centurion's confession (15:39)
- B' presence of women who followed Jesus from Galilee and ministered to him (15:40-41)
- A' Joseph of Arimathea's approach to Pilate to get Jesus' body, wrapping it in the linen shroud, and burying it (15:42-47).

It is beyond the scope of this article to spell out all the literary and thematic indices for the parallelism or to clarify its exact nature in each pair. It suffices to note the following: In the first place, the events narrated in 15:20d-36 (A B C D) on the whole express the actors' negative attitude to Jesus, whereas in 15:38-47 (A' B' C' D') it is very positive. Secondly, most of the events in 15:20d-36 (see specially 15:29-32, 35-36) highlight the contradiction involved in suffering Messiahship which however in 15:38-47 is accepted and confessed. Finally, not less important, the pivotal point or dividing line between these contrasting attitudes is the death of Jesus (15:37). In other words, it is precisely the death of Jesus that differentiated the two: disbelief and faith in a suffering Messiah.

Now we take a closer look at 15:38-47, particularly 15:38-39. We have seen in the previous section that the splitting of the Temple curtain (15:38) is closely linked with Jesus' death (15:37) — signifying the abrogation of the Temple-centered relation with God and all that the Temple stood for. Here we look at the scene of splitting the Temple veil from another angle

viz., in close association with the scene of Jesus' baptism, particularly because the verb *schizo* occurs in Mark only in these two scenes. The following parallelism between the two scenes is very striking:

#### Jesus' baptism

Rending of the heavens  
Voice from heaven that  
Jesus is God's beloved Son  
(Ps 2:7) precisely because  
he will be the suffering  
servant (Is 42:1).

#### Jesus' death

Rending of the Temple curtain  
Centurion's confession that  
Jesus is the Son of God,  
precisely because he is the  
suffering Messiah (for details  
see below).

This parallelism has a very profound theological significance. In Jesus' baptism the heavens, a fixed barrier in the communication between God and Israel are rent asunder and God's voice declares Jesus' identity as well as clarifies the nature of his mission as that of the suffering servant<sup>22</sup>. Likewise, it is in Jesus' death that the Temple, the barrier in the relation between God and humans, is rent asunder and Jesus' true identity as the Son of God is confessed.

In what sense should the title, Son of God be understood in Mk 15:39? Certainly not in reference to a king who is an adopted son of God as in 2 Sam 7:14; Ps 2:7 etc. Nor in the sense of a divine man. The precise meaning becomes clear by studying the occurrence of the title, Son of God, in its context. In 1:11 Jesus is addressed by God as his beloved Son as in Ps 2:7; but he is beloved Son precisely because he will be the suffering servant as in Is 42:1. The declaration of the unclean spirits that Jesus is the Son of God (3:11) is accompanied by a strict command to secrecy (3:12). The possessed man's address of Jesus as the Son of the Most High God (5:7) is followed by the commanding exorcism (5:8). The declaration of the voice from heaven — Jesus as God's beloved Son (9:7) — is accompanied by Jesus' strict command to secrecy till the Son of Man is risen from the dead (9:9). The centurion's confession that Jesus is the Son of God in 15:39 is not followed by any secrecy motif precisely because this confession is made at seeing the death of Jesus. In other words, to understand Jesus' true

22 Cf. Kuhnirakkattel, (see n. 5 above), 20; Ninenham, (see n. 7 above), 58-59,

identity one must understand him as the suffering Messiah. The contrast between the insulting mockery — suffering Messiahship as stupidity (15:29-32) — and the centurion's confession — suffering Messiahship as the core of Christian faith (15:39) — confirms our interpretation<sup>23</sup>.

The mystery of the suffering Messiahship is fully realized in Jesus' death, the mystery confessed by the centurion. It is this confession (the son of God) that forms part of the title of the Gospel according to Mark in 1:1.

### B. A sanctuary constructed in three days

Having seen the decisive role of Jesus' death in the abrogation of the Temple-based relation with God, we now turn our attention to the eschatological sanctuary<sup>24</sup> that emerged as the fruit of Jesus' death.

This aspect of the theme of the temple is developed with slightly different nuances in various strands of the NT. Acts 7:48-50 (quoting Is 66:1-2) and 17:24 affirm that God does not dwell in sanctuaries made with hands.<sup>25</sup> The Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of a true tent (*skēnē*) that is set up not by man but by the Lord (8:2), of a greater and more perfect tent (*skene*) that is not made by hands, that is to say, not part of this creation (9:11). A number of exegetes agree that in these texts tent (*skene*) refers to the risen body of Jesus.<sup>26</sup>

23 One should note that this sharp contrast is greatly missing in Matthew and, particularly, in Luke. In Matthew the splitting of the Temple veil is one among other apocalyptic, eschatological signs that occur after Jesus' death (27:51-53); moreover, the declaration of the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus (so not the centurion only as in Mk 15:39) is a reaction not due to the death of Jesus but due to the apocalyptic events that occurred (Mt 27:54). In Luke the rending of the Temple curtain (23:45) precedes Jesus' death (23:46); furthermore, in Luke the centurion does not confess Jesus' identity as in Mark but only praises God saying, "Certainly this man was innocent!" (23:47).

24 Note that in the section of Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem in chs. 11-13 Mark consistently uses *hieron* (11:11, 15, 16, 27; 12:35; 13:1, 3) not *naos* — even while referring to it later in 14:49. In contrast in the Passion narrative only *naos* is employed (14:58; 15:29, 38), never *hieron*.

25. It is instructive to note that, although *hieron* occurs 25 times and *naos* only twice in Acts, in these two texts not *hieron* but *naos* is used (in the former implicitly and in the latter explicitly).

26 For instance, Albert Vanhoye, *Testi del Nuovo Testamento sul Sacerdozio*,

In Jn 2:13-22 one notices a systematic development of this theme. Jesus finds the temple (*hieron*) being used as a place of business transactions (2:14). So in the process of cleansing the temple he blames them for making his Father's house (*oikos*) into a house of trade (2:16). The Jews then ask Jesus to show them a sign to authenticate his authority (2:18). Jesus answers them, "Destroy this temple (*naon*) and in three days I will raise it up" (2:19). The Jews view that such an event is impossible (2:20). The evangelist clarifies the matter saying that by *naos* Jesus meant his own body (*soma*). In this context the sanctuary (*naos*) that is constructed in three days is obviously Jesus' own risen body.<sup>27</sup>

Another text on the emergence of the new sanctuary is Mk 14:58 where false witnesses accuse Jesus of having said, "I will destroy this temple made with hands (*cheiropoieton*) and in three days I will build another, not made with hands (*acheiropoieton*).

The antithetic parallelism indicates the contrast between the temple that will be destroyed and the one that will be constructed: the former is man-made whose construction lasted long whereas the latter is not man-made and constructed in three days. The sanctuary (*naos*) that is man-made as well as constructed in three days obviously refers to the risen body of Jesus.<sup>29</sup>

In brief, the risen body of Jesus is the new, eschatological sanctuary, the *locus* where man authentically encounters God.<sup>30</sup>

### C. Most perfect and efficacious sacrifice

Although the terms temple (*hieron*) and sanctuary (*naos*) do not occur in the Epistle to the Hebrews the author clearly

Rome: Biblical Institute 1976, 105-106.

27 Cf. C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St John*, London: SPCK, 1978 199-200.

28 Mk 15:29 adds no new element on our theme.

29 The phrase, 'in three days', does not seem to be qualitatively different from 'on the third day' (1 Cor 15:4; Mt 16:21; 17:23 etc) and 'after three days' (Mk 8:31; 9:31 etc) since 'three days' has a theological emphasis rather than chronological (cf. Xavier Leon-Dufour, *Resurrection de Jesus et message pascal*, Paris: Seuil, 1971, 33-35).

30 The view that *naos* in Mk 14:58 refers to the Christian community (so Donahue, *op. cit.*; 103-104) is not convincing.

emphasizes the superiority of Jesus' priesthood, his sacrifice and its efficacy. From the purview of our study it suffices to pinpoint the following significant and relevant aspects.

1. The purpose of the OT priesthood and that of the NT (Jesus' priesthood) was the same, viz., to be a mediator between humans and God. Yet the way they chose was entirely different. Because the priests of the old dispensation were humans in all aspects of life including sin, their main concern and preoccupation was to establish relation with God. For this purpose the method followed was a system of separation from everything profane/impure on the one hand and a sacrificial system which necessarily contained different stages of separation on the other hand. Thus in the sanctuary people were separate from priests, priests from the high priest, high priest from the altar, altar from the victim, and victim from God. In contrast, Jesus being the Son of God was perfectly united with God; consequently, his prime concern was to identify himself fully with humans in all respects — including pain and suffering, weakness and temptation, anxiety and death (Heb 2:18; 5:7-8) but without sinning (4:15).

2. But there was an inherent contradiction between the purpose of the sacrifices, viz., to remove sins and then to enter into communion with God, and the intrinsic structure of sacrifices — manifold separations as noted above and various rituals (8:3-4; 9:6-10) which do not and even cannot affect humans at the personal, existential level. As a result, there is no guarantee of the removal of sin (10:2-4) and of having attained communion with God. In other words, sacrifices did not effect a real transformation. Jesus however, not only refused to observe the ritual and cultic prescriptions (Mk 7:1-14) and seriously questioned the ritualistic conception of religion (Mt 12:5-7; Lk 10:31-32) but identified himself with ritually and cultically impure humans (Mk 1:40-45; 2:14-17; Lk 15:1-2, etc). The culminating and peak point of this identification with humans is Jesus' Passion and Death which the author of Hebrews interprets in sacrificial categories. In this sacrifice, unique and unrepeatable (Heb 10:10, 12, 24), there is no separation at all since Jesus is the priest, altar and victim as well. It is an option to do God's will in full knowledge and total freedom, in an indissoluble identification with his sisters and

brothers and in complete obedience to the Father's will. The two relations — the relation with God and the relation with humans — are well blended together in one and the same act of accepting suffering and death out of love because this love is at the same time love of God and love of fellow humans. Thus the filial obedience to the Father enabled him to give his own life for humans and his immense compassion for humans brought him to the glory of the Father. Jesus, in this way, effected a definitive removal of sins and cemented an indissoluble union between God and humans as well.

3. In the frame of our study, then, there is a radical difference between the priesthood and the sacrificial system of the old dispensation centered on the Temple and of the priesthood and sacrifice of Jesus which is through and through 'secular'.

#### **D. Worshipping the Father in spirit and in truth**

The dialogue between Jesus and the Samaritan woman in Jn 4 is instructive, particularly from three angles: 1. the theme of water and living water; 2. the revelation of Jesus' identity (verse 12: Jesus as someone greater than the patriarch Jacob; verse 19: Jesus as a prophet; verses 25-26 Jesus as the Messiah); and 3. the progressive presentation of the nature of worship. What interests us in this study is the Johannine presentation of worship in 4:20-24. For a better understanding of the text we shall see the structure of 4:20-24.

A Our fathers worshipped on this mountain (Gerizim)  
but you worship in Jerusalem

A' The hour is coming when you will worship the Father  
neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem;  
true worshippers will worship the Father  
in spirit and in truth.

It is worth noting that verses 20-24 are framed by the question of Jesus' identity as a prophet (4:19) and Jesus as the Messiah (4:25-26). In other words, John is presenting not the worship of God as in Judaism (typically Temple-based worship whether at Gerizim or Jerusalem) but of Christian worship characterized as worship of the *Father* and of the Messianic time (*hora*).

What is meant by worshipping in spirit and in truth? Ignace de la Potterie in his scholarly study<sup>31</sup> has convincingly established that it is accepting the revelation of Jesus Christ in and through the action of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, Christian worship is not confined to a building or a place but characteristically person oriented. Again, it is a given gift (= the revelation in Jesus Christ) which is realized not by one's own efforts alone but through the action of the Holy Spirit.

### III. Christians as God's Sanctuary

The theme of Christians as the temples of the Holy Spirit is rather common among Christians. So I do not intend to deal with this topic at length. However, it must be noted from the outset that Paul uses temple (*hieron*) only twice, both in 1 Cor 9:13, in reference to pagan temple. On the other hand, he employs sanctuary (*naos*) eight times, of which five are qualified by 'of God' (*tou theou*). So it seems to me that it is better to use the phrase, 'sanctuary of God', whether in reference to Christian community or church as in 1 Cor 3:16-17 and Eph 2:21 or individual Christians as in 1 Cor 6:19 and 2 Cor 6:16.

Christians by virtue of faith and baptism are very personally and intimately united with Christ as a foetus to its mother (Rom 6:5) and with one another in such a way that they are one in Christ (Gal 3:28; 1 Cor 12:12-30). This union is effected by the Holy Spirit in such a way that the Holy Spirit dwells in a Christian (Rom 8:9-11). Therefore the Holy Spirit is a dynamic person dwelling Christians and Christian communities and animating them<sup>32</sup>. Thus he is the agent of unity.

Paul employs this basic theological conviction to counteract the disunity among Christians at Corinth. He emphasizes that the foundation of Christian life is laid on Jesus Christ, the cornerstone, and the Holy Spirit is the dynamic agent of divinisation, dwelling in Christians. As regards the apostles who preached the gospel, it is rather immaterial who preached it. What is significant is the unity that should prevail among Christians

31 Ignace de la Potterie, *La verite dans saint Jean*, vol. 2, Rome: Biblical Institute, 1977, 673-706, specially 701-706.

32 Gunther Bornkamm, *Paul*, London: Hodder, 1971, 180-82.

because of their bond of union based on the foundation (Christ) and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit who animates and unites Christians into a community. So there is no room for division among Christians. This is the basic message conveyed in Eph. 2:21 as well.

The radicality of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is used to check sexual abuses (1 Cor 6:19) and a Christian's relation with unbelievers (2 Cor 6:16).

The Christian, therefore, is animated by the Spirit that he is said to be walking in the Spirit, producing the fruits of the Spirit (Gal 5:16-26) and constantly working for the unity of the church.

### Conclusion

1. In the first part of our study we have seen that as Jesus continues to reveal himself as the suffering Messiah his anti-Temple stance also comes to the foreground. The Jewish authorities who refuse to accept suffering Messiahship want to put Jesus to death.

2. Although the Jewish authorities succeed in putting Jesus to death, paradoxically so to say, it is not the final stage of Jesus' life. His very death occasions to confess Jesus as the suffering Messiah.

3. Suffering Messiahship is not a passing reality but the basis of a totally new relation between humans and God. The suffering Messiah has been raised from the dead and continues to be our high priest before the Father.

4. Jesus' Death considered as a sacrifice is diametrically opposed to the Temple-based sacrificial system.

5. True worship necessarily consists in accepting Jesus' revelation animated by the Spirit who lives in Christians as a dynamic principle of unity.

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